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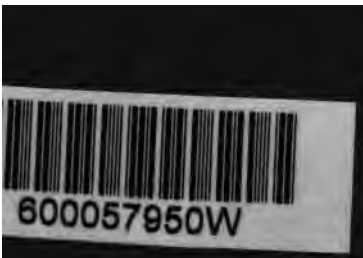
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LEAVES.

BY.

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AUTHOR OF "T LEAVES," "TANTLER'S SISTER, AND OTHER UNTRUTHFUL STORIES," ETC.

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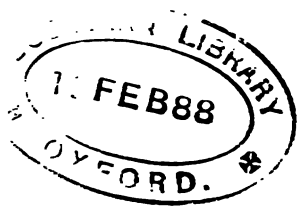

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WHAT BOUSTER DID.

We had to give some sort of entertainment, and the only question was what it was to be. We, that is self and lady, had been repeatedly dining and dancing and receptioning and drumming and amateur theatricalising at the expense of our friends, and our children had been out to tea all over the place; and all this time we had not called our neighbours together to partake of so much as a glass of marsala and a cucumber sandwich. Therefore we felt that society was entitled to look to us for some return, and that our response to that expectation ought to be worthy of us. So we deliberated long and anxiously.

Our social debt went far beyond the dimensions of any dinner within our compass. We could only get twelve people at the outside into our dining-room, and then our waiter (pew-opener at a neighbouring church) always had to squeeze himself into nothing and perform most difficult evolutions at the window end, resulting on one occasion in his discharging a shower of green peas over a lady's head and shoulders. A dinner was out of the question from every point of view.

Theatricals. We debated that and hesitated very much. My wife had always had a hankering to do Juliet, and she was under the impression that the balustrade of a short second staircase which led to my dressing-room was admir-

ably adapted for the balcony scene. But on my pointing out respectfully that the assembled company would in that case have to leave the drawing-room at the particular juncture and sit on the stairs, she realised that the idea was not practical. Still of course there were many excellent plays, and as we could both act beautifully it was a great temptation. But after much consideration we gave it up in favour of TABLEAUX, which we had never tried before. We both had very elegant figures, and that had something to do with the decision, I daresay. So we sent out the invitations announcing to all whom it might concern that on the eventful evening we should be "At Home" at 8.30. And in the left-hand corner we wrote the word "Tableaux," so that our friends might know what we were going to provide for their amusement.

We required, of course, the assistance of others in getting up the tableaux, because two people cannot make a proper tableau any more than one swallow can make a summer. We looked around us and enlisted the sympathy of our neighbours, Mr. and Mr. Bouster, who were great friends of ours in this lop-sided and not very uncommon matrimonial way, that I was extremely fond of Mrs. Bouster but didn't care much about her husband, and my wife was devoted to Bouster but could not, as she described it, understand what I saw in her. Next we lighted on my old bachelor friend, Horace Pooley, who was of the comic order of person, and Priscilla Vaughan, a maiden lady of comparatively mature age, who had written tons of poetry (still in manuscript) to broken hearts, and quivering lips, and similar objects. We rounded off the company with a young articled pupil of mine, Nichols by name, to whom I wished to show a little

unselfish kindness. It also entered my contemplation that he might be useful in going errands, and looking after details that I was too busy to attend to. Human motives are ever mixed. We thought this would do for a compact nucleus, and that if we wanted further assistance in the way of May-pole dancers, or Halberdices, or such like supernumeraries, we could easily enlist them.

The first thing naturally was to select the tableaux, and we held a preliminary meeting for this express purpose. I led off the discussion as in duty bound, and I made the striking and original observation that I thought we ought to have one historical scene at least, and invited suggestions as to the particular scene or scenes.

"You," I said, turning to Nichols, "have been at school last, and ought to know more history than any of us. Now what is your idea?"

Nichols, being eighteen, blushed crimson; and, after a rather painful pause, was heard to murmur, "William the First, 1066–1087; William the Second, 1087–1100; Henry the First, 1100 ——."

As he did not get any further I relieved his embarrassment by making an appeal to Mrs. Bouster.

"What do you think," said she, "of doing the scene of James the Second escaping over to France in disguise in a boat?'

"Bosh!" interrupted Bhuster. "How can you turn the back drawing-room into the Thames or the Channel with a great boat in it?"

Bouster's criticism was just, but the brusque manner in which he addressed his wife was very painful to me. I thought how differently *I* should have spoken to her if I

had married her instead of my own wife, and she had married me instead of Bouster. Not that I was unhappy in my domestic relations, but merely that Mrs. Bouster was a distinctly charming and pretty woman, and much too good for Bouster.

"I," broke in Miss Vaughan, "should so much like to do a scene with Mary Queen of Scots in it."

"Oh, yes!" chimed in my wife, "that would be delightful. I have always wished to represent Mary Queen of Scots."

"My dear," I replied, "you are about as much like Mary Queen of Scots as you are like the Tattooed Lady. Now if Miss Vaughan would not mind?"

This may at first sight appear unkind, but the fact is that I saw Miss Vaughan freezing visibly when my wife jumped at the idea of taking Mary Queen of Scots for herself, and I was obliged to cut in. Besides if a man (except Bouster) may not snub and repress his own wife, where is the sacred bird of freedom roosting, I should like to know?

Miss Vaughan melted instantly and said that if we really wished it (I gave my wife such a look that she had to say yes she did, but she didn't) she would try her best to do the part.

"What scene in the lady's life should we choose?" I asked.

As I looked rather pointedly at Bouster, he was obliged to say something.

"What do you say to the scene where she is stepping on shore, and the Earl of Darnley lays his cloak down for her to walk upon?"

Pooley exploded with laughter, and was nearly annihilated

by a savage glance from Bouster, who did not at all like being laughed at.

"Perhaps," observed Bouster in a tone of cutting irony, "Mr. Fooley, I beg pardon, I mean Pooley, can suggest an improvement on that very *poor* idea."

"No, indeed, I can't," replied Pooley. "I think it would be the funniest thing we could possibly do, only perhaps Queen Elizabeth and Walter Raleigh might be rather annoyed."

It dawned upon Bouster that he had put his foot into a large historical hole, so he began to look violently at a photograph album, which he held upside-down, with a face in which a desire to assassinate Pooley was plainly evidenced.

An awkward pause ensued, everybody, except Pooley, feeling uncomfortable and looking furtively at Bouster, and pretending not to do so, till at last Miss Vaughan broke in plaintively—

"I should like to be executed."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Vaughan!"

"I should like to be executed."

"Oh, indeed!" I really did not know what else to say.

"I mean as Mary Queen of Scots. I should like to have my head on the block and the headsman about to sever it."

"Oh yes—certainly—with pleasure," I replied.

"We might," went on Miss Vaughan with gathering enthusiasm, "have funereal music and a priest standing by me, and the headsman with his axe uplifted, and faithful waiting-women almost fainting, and a guard of soldiers turning away and involuntarily weeping, and a basket to

receive my head when severed from the trunk. Oh it would be beautiful!"

Mrs. Bouster turned pale, and we all felt rather creepy except Miss Vaughan, who was quite carried away with the subject, and Bouster, who still glowered.

Pooley could not resist the opening—"I daresay," he remarked blandly, "Mr. Bouster would not mind doing the headsman."

"With pleasure," retorted Bouster with a snap.

My wife being a thoroughly practical woman, at once began to think of the needful properties.

"What will you do for the block and the axe, dear?" she asked me sweetly.

I replied that I had not got them in stock, but had no doubt Nichols would manage to borrow them somewhere for us. At which prospective honour Nichols looked very pleased.

"You might give Mr. Nichols a note to the butcher," added my wife thoughtfully. "I daresay he could lend us what we want."

I noted this suggestion down, but bade my wife leave these little details for after consideration, as the object of our present meeting was to discuss more important matters.

"Now then," said I in my airiest manner (which is very airy indeed—quite draughty in fact), "let us forget tragedy and think of a lighter subject for another tableau. Come, Pooley, you're the man for this part of the business. Give us a comic idea."

Now it is all very well to be comic, but excellent jesters are often taken aback when asked point blank to display that quality to order. And on the present occasion when

we all turned towards Pooley (Bouster's face having a decided sneer on it, by the way) I am afraid I must go so far as to say that he looked rather foolish.

"I—I—don't exactly remember anything very funny to do just now," replied Pooley feebly; at which confession, Bouster, for the first and only time that evening, smiled a satisfied smile.

I felt that I had been too abrupt with Pooley, so with admirable tact I gradually led the conversation to scenes from Dickens and Lever and other writers, until he recovered his serenity and joined in the discussion. It resulted in our choosing the scene from Pickwick in which the fat boy discovers Mr. Tupman making love to Miss Wardle in the arbour. The only hitch that occurred in this part of the business was a little mistake of judgment on my wife's part. She felt that she had been guilty of a breach of manners in trying to secure the *rôle* of Mary Queen of Scots for herself, so she bethought her to atone for it by offering Miss Vaughan the part of Miss Wardle in this tableau. But Miss Vaughan did not appreciate the compliment, and said in a tone of some severity that she must really decline, as she was afraid she should not be able to look it. As a matter of fact she would have looked it to a T, but this is a world of self-deception, and for my part, I am not at all sure that it is not a very good job too where personal appearance is concerned.

Mrs. Bouster most good-naturedly tried to help us out of the difficulty by offering to appear as Miss Wardle, but this I really could not bear, so I trod on my wife's foot heavily, and then of course she very properly offered to do it. So that was settled happily.

After that we got on capitally. We wanted to do four tableaux in all, and we chose for one of the remaining two the pathetic scene from the "Vicar of Wakefield," in which news is brought to him of the loss of his property, and for the other a representation of a servants' party, interrupted by the unexpected return of the master of the house.

There was one thing that rather weighed on my mind—what we should do with our guests during the long pauses between the tableaux. They would all be sitting, in front of a curtain, packed together like sardines, and might naturally grow a little wearied. I mentioned this dilemma and brought down upon myself a really dreadful blow.

"I need not be on at all in the two lighter tableaux," said Miss Vaughan; "and I'm sure I should have plenty of time while they were going on to dress for the others."

She paused, and seemed to expect me to say something. So I said, "Indeed!" I said it rather faintly, for an acute sense of danger was stealing over me.

"I thought perhaps it might meet the difficulty if I were to read my tragic poem, 'The Broken Blood Vessel.' It would occupy quite half an hour."

A solemn silence fell on us, and mute appealing glances were cast at me.

"I'm sure it's exceedingly kind of you, Miss Vaughan; and I can't thank you enough, but we must not encroach on your good nature, and I fear it will be too fatiguing for you in addition to the tableaux."

"Oh, no! not at all, thank you. I should be most happy to do it."

This was too much for me, so I signalled to my wife to bring up the reserved forces. Whereupon she murmured—

"Thank you very much indeed, dear Miss Vaughan. It's *so* good of you, and if we *should* want anything between the tableaux, we should gladly avail ourselves of it; but do you know, when one really comes to consider it, I don't *think* we need entertain the people then, if we have a little music, and tea, and coffee, and—and—things."

I could see that Miss Vaughan did not at all like it, and was dying to trot out the "Broken Blood Vessel;" but she could not burst it at our own house without our permission, and whenever she tried to lead up to it afterwards, we all talked violently about something else.

There was an immense deal of preparation, and I really don't know what we should have done without Nichols. He was most useful, and although it was not strictly professional training for him, still I felt that it would serve to bring out many good qualities, and be to his lasting advantage; so I often gave him leave to be away from the office. I purposely avoided helping him very much because I wished to make him self-reliant, and I was rather busy too; so he became a sort of aide-de-camp to my wife. I regarded it as an important epoch in the life of Nichols, and well worth all the fee paid to me with his articles.

I pass over the rehearsals, and transport you to my mansion on the eventful evening, a few minutes before the commencement of the tableaux.

In the front drawing-room compact rows of heated friends were huddled on rout seats, with no backs, hired for the occasion, regardless of expense, and calculated to promote spinal complaint on the shortest notice. Tea and coffee were being handed round by waiters, who passed between the several rows with much the same

ease and comfort that you may have observed to distinguish the traditional lady of indefinite proportions who is wont to proceed along the pit seats of a theatre between the acts with oranges in a clothes' basket. A hum of subdued conversation, and an air of expectancy. Many curious glances directed at the green curtain which concealed the expected tableaux; more especially when sounds were heard as of hammering of nails and hoarse whispers and unaccountable bumps of solid articles against one another, and flutterings to and fro, and other infallible indications of stage preparation. To relieve the tension my sister-in-law, as per previous arrangement (made behind Miss Vaughan's back), played a polka.

Then a bell rang — the sort of bell associated in a general way with Muffins, but which signified on this occasion that we were ready to begin.

Upon this the polka ceased, also as per previous arrangement, and after a momentary hush, up went the curtain; at least up went one side of it, but the other side stuck on a nail, and I had to make Nichols uncrease himself from a statuesque attitude and tear it off, and get back the best way he could.

First came our "Vicar of Wakefield" tableau.

I was discovered as Dr. Primrose, seated at the table in a room at the Vicarage with my two youngest children (real children and really mine) standing by me and folded in my arms—I should rather say folded in my left arm, because with the right I supported my head on the table. Olivia stood near me in the person of Miss Vaughan, and Mrs. Primrose (Mrs. Bouster to wit) was contemplating me from the other side of the table. Nichols, as Moses,

was looking up from a Latin book in a corner, and at the back were Bouster and my wife as Mr. Burchell and Sophia. I had always noticed in rehearsals that they kept rather unnecessarily at the back together, and whispered a good deal, but this was no time for private jealousies. The news of my reverse of fortune was supposed to have just broken upon us, and we were all looking jolly miserable, as in duty bound, except my two children, who, in spite of all the warnings I had given them, began to gurgle at each other in an alarming way with suppressed mirth. Luckily their faces were towards me, and I don't think the audience noticed it much. After a minute or so, during the latter part of which I would have given a sovereign to be allowed to wag my head, the signal was given, and amid much applause down came the curtain again, till it stuck on the same nail and left most of our legs in view. We hopped nimbly away, however, and the curtain was pulled down.

The audience had to wait, of course, till we could change our clothes and the scene too, and this meant rather a lengthy pause. Howbeit I think the lemonade came on just then, and my sister-in-law went to the piano, and this time warbled one of the last new songs—I believe it was called "She wore a Wreath of Roses"—and they managed to get over it somehow. At least I suppose they did, but I really was too busy to think about it, for I had to see to putting up the arbour in which Mr. Tupman was to sit with Miss Wardle. I should have asked Nichols to do it, but he was being padded out upstairs for the fat boy. I ought perhaps to say that he had been engaged for nearly two entire days in making the arbour, with my free permission, and that there was nothing to do but fasten a few

detached pieces together. I accidentally placed one of these wrong side out, but it was fortunately noticed by Nichols just as the curtain was going to be pulled up. I had it set right, not because it was of real importance, but for the sake of the lad, who was naturally proud of his handiwork.

The scene is too familiar to need description. Pooley, as Tupman, was gazing most amorously at my wife. Bouster had badly wanted to do it, but I really could not stand that in consequence of his conduct as Burchell to which I have already alluded. So he stood outside the back drawing-room door with a saturnine expression of countenance, as if he could have stabbed me, and eaten Pooley. Standing near the arbour, sideways to the audience, and with an expression of profound wonderment on his face, was Nichols, as the fat boy. After a few moments the curtain descended and quickly rose again to reveal Tupman and Miss Wardle, looking as much as possible like nothing with regard to each other, but malevolently eyeing the fat boy, who had advanced close to them, and so made them aware of his presence.

Great laughter and applause followed the descent of the curtain, which had hardly gone down, before Nichols excitedly began to undo most of his buttons and shed pillows and bolsters in all directions, in his anxiety to get ready for the next scene.

Having taken no part in the second tableau, and being baulked of her wishes on the subject of the Broken Blood Vessel, Miss Vaughan had all this time been, so to speak, getting her neck ready. For the third tableau was to be our great historical scene of the execution of Mary Queen

of Scots, and Miss Vaughan was to repose upon the block, in accomplishment of her ardent desire to that effect.

I had told my sister-in-law to pave the way by playing the Dead March in Saul, and was somewhat discomposed, while changing my garments, to hear the distant strains of "Three little Maids from School," and other inappropriately light music proceeding from the drawing-room. As I could not go in person to the scene of action, I wrote on a slip of paper, "For heaven's sake play something dismal!" and sent it down, and was soon rewarded by hearing most low-spiritual moans from the piano, quite befitting the awful scene that was to follow, and conducive to abdominal pains of a sympathetic type.

We had arranged this tableau, like the last one, in two parts. First a representation of the arrival of the gruesome procession, and next the prostration of Miss Vaughan, in readiness for the fatal blow. I was rather averse myself to the latter part, as being somewhat realistically painful; but Miss Vaughan would have it, so I gave in. I have an impression that she fancied the shape of her neck and shoulders, and rather wished, if I may use the irreverent term, to disport them in public.

I don't remember where the block came from, but I know we did not follow up my wife's crude suggestions about the butcher. I rather think Nichols bought it for us in the Borough after a four hours' hunt, and that it wasn't a block at all, but an old wooden coal-box, with a slope cut in it (by Nichols) to fit the human head, or something else quite removed in its original purpose from the use to which we adapted it. But it really made no odds, because we covered it—at least Nichols did—with black crape all over,

to look nice and funereal, and Miss Vaughan, who could hardly be kept off it at rehearsals, declared that it fitted beautifully. Near it we placed my waste-paper basket, filled with sawdust (taken from the wine-cellar), to represent a receptacle for the decapitated head.

So attentive was I to petty details that for this tableau I even muffled the bell which rang up the curtain—at least I got Nichols to do so.

The tableau was, I really think, a masterpiece. Miss Vaughan, as the central figure, was seen with her (historically) beautiful neck exposed in readiness for the executioner, in the act of advancing to the block, bought by Nichols. I, robed as a priest, was in close attendance, and my wife and Mrs. Bouster, as faithful female followers in a state of sniffles, were also near the doomed lady.

Bouster, as the headsman, was leaning on his axe by the side of the block, looking very much as he looked when Pooley took that rise out of him about Queen Elizabeth and Walter Raleigh. It just came in right now though. Pooley, with our door key and all the other keys I could find in the house hanging to his girdle, portrayed the governor of the prison in the background, and Nichols in command of an army of two represented the military element.

Down went the curtain to slow music, and flop went Miss Vaughan on to the block as if she were going to bed. She threw back her (formerly) luxuriant hair, and bared her neck still further in readiness for the blow. We all changed our attitude and expressions so as to indicate an averted gaze and concentrated horror, except Bouster, who lifted the axe on high in both hands.

The signal was given for the curtain to rise, and as it did so a perceptible thrill passed over the audience. We all remained for a few moments motionless, and then, to my very great surprise and annoyance, Bouster called out in a tone of reckless savagery, "Here goes." We saw a sudden flash, and before any one could move or utter a sound Bouster had brought down the axe and taken Miss Vaughan's head off as clean as a whistle!

. . . . . .

The fourth tableau was to be our screamingly funny one, about the servants' party, but we decided after some discussion that perhaps it would be in better taste in the circumstances not to have it, though Pooley was of the contrary opinion, and thought it a great pity as we had made all the preparations.

. . . . . .

I got Bouster to call on Miss Vaughan's people afterwards and apologise. He assured them he had given way to a momentary impulse and that he was really awfully sorry. Of course this left nothing to be said, especially as Bouster added that if he could make up for it in any way by getting them tickets for Hurlingham or taking them to the Academy or showing them any other little attention he should be most happy to do so. Still, although Bouster got out of it handsomely, I would rather it had not occurred at my house.

I GO SAILING.

I BELIEVE that the motion of sailing upon the ocean wave is extremely delightful for some persons. Personally, I can only say that on the few occasions of my being tempted to embark, I have spent the greater part of the time leaning over the side of the vessel (I think it was the lee side I used to be sent to) with my face downwards, and the remainder in making the most solemn resolutions that never, under any provocation, or in any conceivable circumstances, would I do it again.

But when I was asked not long ago, by my friend Bilberry, to come for a sail on the river in his boat, the *Blonde*, I thought unto myself, Here is the very thing for me. I shall have all the delights of sailing, without any fear of being ill. I shall lie on a cushion, with my legs over the edge of the boat, while we glide over the rippling, but otherwise perfectly smooth water. I shall gaze on the azure vault above. I shall compose verses about the breeze sighing in the trees, and the willow making something (I don't know what, but the idea is sure to develop) its pillow. I shall very likely sing "Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon," whether I am asked to do so or not.

Well, I purchased a new straw hat, with the name of a ship on the ribbon, and I donned my white flannels, and I

got my wife to sew two gilt buttons on to an old blue serge coat, which had just that nautical spice about it demanded by the occasion, and I went.

The place of rendezvous was Henley; and when I reached the river's brink there was the *Blonde* and there was Bilberry. I was a little quenched by observing that the boat was built upon the principle of having a diminutive deck, surrounding a deep, egg-shaped hole. I realised that the deck was ornamental, and that I should have to sit in that hole; and I did not see the cushions of my imagination, or perceive how I could bring off that arrangement of dangling my legs over the side unless I stood on my head, which I was not prepared to do for any length of time. But then the movement—the gliding, the trees, the breeze, the willow, the pillow! Who would weigh such trivial inconveniences against them?

Bilberry, who was busy with the ropes and sails, told me to come on board. He said it in a large sort of way, as if it were a frigate at least. I was just obeying this direction, and had placed a foot on the deck, when he gave a loud shriek, upon which I took my foot back again very quickly indeed.

"What's the matter?" I asked anxiously.

"My dear fellow," he answered, in a tone of deep emotion, "you've got heels on, and you trod on the polished deck with them; I would not have it scratched for anything. Wait a moment." He here produced a newspaper from his pocket, laid it tenderly down on the deck for me to tread on, and I meekly made my way into the egg-shaped hole, over a leading article with which I entirely disagreed.

"You won't mind helping me with the ropes, old chap. It takes two to sail this boat," said Bilberry.

I felt a faint suspicion steal over me that this was rather like working my passage out, and did not seem to savour very greatly of the trees, and breeze, and willow, and pillow, and "Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon" line of recreation; but of course I said I should be delighted.

As soon as I had got into the hole and exchanged that remark with Bilberry, he prepared for action. The man at the boat-house let go, the sails went up, and Bilberry took a long pole and pushed off. The *Blonde* moved out in a stately manner, but when she had journeyed the distance of the pole (I refer to Bilberry's pole) she stopped, and remained perfectly stationary. Bilberry seized the rudder and worked it convulsively, brought down a sail all over me, put up another one which took my hat off, jumped about on me and round me, as if he were alone in a room measuring thirty feet by twenty, instead of being confined with another human being in a small hole, became purple in the face with his exertions, and made observations about the wind which I really cannot reproduce. Then to my unspeakable relief the breeze caught the something sail on the something tack, and we got under weigh.

I had been sadly agitated and upset, but for a few minutes after this our progress was so satisfactory that Bilberry did not require my services; and although I had nothing to sit on, I began almost to recall the trees and breeze anticipations. Bilberry, who held the tiller, beamed as his vessel sped along, and remarked at intervals that she was "Kiting no end." I did not know what that meant, but I answered every time, "Isn't she just," and once I went so far as to accompany my answer with the appropriate gesture of putting my straw hat on the side of my head.

All of a sudden he shouted to me, "Look out, she's gybing." He did not tell me where to look out, or what gybing implied; but I was not left long in ignorance, as I received the next moment a sounding whack on one side of my head, which nearly knocked me into the river. It came from the boom, which had crossed over suddenly from one side to the other, and taken my head *en route*. I had just regained partial consciousness when the air was rent with another shout from Bilberry, "Look out, she's gybing again," and I then experienced another violent blow of the same description on the reverse side of my head. This implied that the boom had gone back again. As it was important to my family that I should not return home with my skull beaten in, I spent the remainder of the trip in a position which may best be likened to that of the passive party in a game of leap-frog, while the boom gybed about over the top of my back at its pleasure. Once only was I tempted to raise my head, and that was when Bilberry called out "Hullo! we are in the Doldrums?" I looked up then and said that it was an odd name to call that part of the river. Whereupon Bilberry laughed in a fiendish manner, and said that the Doldrums meant being becalmed. He then proceeded to wrestle with the masts, sails, spars, ropes, and rudder as one possessed, and ordered me to hold this rope, and pull on to that, and tighten the other, and loosen the next one; and the more I did it the more every rope I became in any way connected with ran through my hands like mad, and took consignments of skin and flesh with it. This was not what Bilberry wanted; and when he looked up aloft and saw various ropes, which ought to have been quite straight and tight (I beg pardon, I should say

taut), hanging in complicated festoons, he said very unkind things to me. I bore them in silence for some time, and then the worm turned (the worm had just room to do so), and I spoke to Bilberry like a father. And this is word for word what I said :—

"B. Bilberry, sir,—you invited me to go out for a sail with you. I thought it meant a pleasant, lazy, soothing, poetical little trip, and I came. You subjected me to the ignominy of stepping on a penny paper for the sake of your preposterous deck. You have put me into a hole which a galley slave would resent. You have jumped upon me as if I were a sack. You have given me nothing whatever to sit upon. Your boom has knocked me nearly silly. Your ropes have mangled my hands. Your ridiculous vessel, after being persuaded with the greatest difficulty to start at all, has subsided into total inactivity at intervals of sickening frequency, and now you abuse me as if I were a drunken A.B. seaman. I demand to be landed."

I was put on shore, in the course of which process one leg was immersed up to the thigh, and Bilberry and I have not been on speaking terms since.

GLADYS.

Most travellers who walk to and fro on the dusty high road of daily working life, turn aside now and again and repair for repose and refreshment to some favourite nook in which they have gained a foothold. My own particular personal retreat was for many years Jack Merriman's bachelor establishment, in which I always found plenty of both.

Strange as it may seem to those who know the many objectionable features of my character, I was always welcome there. I came when I liked, left when I liked, did what I liked. If I read the *Field* newspaper (his *Field*—before he had seen it) in his face, he smoked in philosophic silence and filled my glass. If I put the paper down and he took it up, and I thereupon began immediately to talk to him, so that he could not get through a sentence anyhow, he yielded, put it aside, and talked away. In short, it was Liberty Hall to me.

Jack Merriman was a positively tremendous bachelor. The citadel had been assaulted again and again to no purpose, and at last he had been left conqueror on the field. I, on the other hand, was largely married, and although I have found that state one of the most exalted and unalloyed bliss, I will admit that when I appeared at Jack Merriman's door, bag in hand, on a Saturday evening, with intent to

remain at his establishment till Monday morning, the unmistakable savour of single blessedness, which commenced with a pervading reality of tobacco smoke the moment I was let in, and developed on further inspection into confused riches of briar root pipes, hat boxes, guns, periodicals, bottles, cricket bats, foils, gloves, terriers, and tweed garments—well, it was a not unpleasing contrast in its way to the order and decorum of my matrimonial abode, where pipes are not seen and smoking is not permitted, save in a subterranean cavern which has a tendency towards dampness.

We used to compare notes, Jack and I, and wonder what my life would have been like if I had not married early and had twenty-three children, and what his life would have been like if he had married and had had a more or less extensive family. And all our conversations proceeded on the assumption that it was no more within the range of possibility for Jack to marry than for me to unmarry. I may also mention incidentally that my tenth son had been named John Merriman, after Jack, who was his godfather, and who had thrown out hints which led me to infer that my son, John Merriman, would not be a burden to me.

All this is prologue—very nice, interesting, well-told prologue; but still prologue. And now, up goes the curtain, and the real blood-curdling business begins.

Jack Merriman fell in love. For thirty-four years he had lived and fought and got never a scratch—and then he did it. It began at a picnic, continued at tennis parties and odd meetings, and finished up, with fatal results, at a dance. The end might possibly not have come so soon if there had been no garden at the house where that dance came

off, or if the time of year had not been summer. But there was a garden, and it was summer—and he asked if she would, and she said that she should rather prefer it than otherwise, and he then said that hers was the only image which, and she replied that he was the only one who. And there it was. These things will happen, and repining is vain, though when the occurrence takes place in the case of a man who keeps a bachelor's house and receives in the same another man who is married, but likes an occasional whiff of bachelor life, it is, as I shall proceed to show, hard to bear.

The first intimation which reached me of the unfair treatment I had received was the following letter:—

"My dear T.,—When will you come down and do a Saturday to Monday? Pray come this week. I want most particularly to see you and tell you all about a very important event that has happened to me. She is the dearest girl in all the world, and I know you will like her when you see her, and rejoice in my unspeakable happiness. Yours ever, "Jack."

A cold shiver came over me as I read the dreadful news; but, with the courage of despair, I nerved myself to bear the worst, and down I went.

Jack received me at the door with an imbecile, annoying kind of blush.

"Congratulate me, my dear fellow," said he impulsively, before I could get my hat off.

I wished him every happiness. I know I did it in a clammy sort of way; but human nature is human nature, and what could you expect from a man in my situation?

Jack hurried me feverishly into the dining-room. It generally smelt like a tobacconist's shop might after a moderate fire, and everything that would hold anything was crammed with pipes and cigar boxes. There was not an implement of smoking of any description to be seen now! This was getting serious, and I faintly asked for a pipe, thinking that I must be dreaming.

"I am sorry I cannot let you have one, old chap; but Gladys doesn't like smoking, so I have given it up."

"But *I* haven't given it up," I answered rather testily. "Can't you rig me up a single pipe? You used to have cartloads."

"Well, you see, my dear fellow, I was so anxious to please Gladys, that I swept the whole place of everything connected with smoking. Would you like to see her photographs?"

"Yes, please," said I grimly.

Photographs—I never saw anything like it. Gladys seemed to me to have turned on a photographer the moment she was engaged, and kept him at it ever since —to say nothing of raking up early productions. Item. Gladys at the age of four, with her fingers in her mouth. Item. Gladys at the age of ten in sausage curls and white stockings. Item. Gladys as a gawky maid of 15, all elbows and legs. Item. Gladys at the age of 16, 17, 18 (two of them), 19 (two of them), 20 (three of them). Then a little peace, and then three at 22 and four at 23. The later ones varying between evening dress, morning dress; hair up, hair down; hat on, bonnet on, no head covering; winter clothing, summer clothing; pleasing expression, glassy stare; standing up, sitting down, in a hammock. I had to go

through the whole lot, and to answer some foolish question about every one of the whole Gladys gallery.

Jack was fairly beside himself, and the maundering rubbish he talked that evening was something pitiful. I tried to draw the conversation into other channels, but it was all of no avail. If I spoke of some cricket match, he replied, that Gladys loved looking on at cricket; or called me darling in utter absence of mind. When I inquired whether he had been to that dance at the Jones's, he answered no, he hadn't, because the people did not know Gladys, and he did not care to go where she was not asked. He poured Gladys into my ear, but quite forgot to pour anything liquid into my glass. I had Gladys before dinner, at dinner, and after dinner; and he even came into my room to talk about her when I went to bed. She was an angel. He was not, he never could be worthy of her. She had filled up an aching void (formerly very comfortably supplied, to the best of my belief, with steak pie). He had never known happiness before. Wasn't he the luckiest fellow in the world for such a girl (very ordinary young woman, I thought, from her photograph) to care for him? She was as good as she was beautiful—(she certainly was not beautiful, so *that* didn't amount to much). Then as to his plans, and when he hoped *the* event would come off, and where he should take Gladys for their wedding trip, and where they would live afterwards; and how Gladys didn't like this place, and did like that place; and how ill she had once been when she was nine; and where he first met her, and what his feelings were then, and how they grew upon him; and how he wondered now that he could have lived before he knew Gladys—(he did manage it, confound him,

and much more comfortably for other parties concerned); and didn't I think there was just the right difference between their ages; and how nice her people were, and how I should like her mother—(smother her mother!); and how he had mentioned me to Gladys, and she had said she would like to know me, an impudent piece of intelligence conveyed in the tone which might fitly accompany an announcement that I had had a peerage conferred on me; and how he had given up spirits as well as smoking; and how she had made these slippers that he had on —did I see the pattern—for him. In short, a farrago of sickening balderdash to the tune of Gladys, which nearly reduced me to distraction.

Among other atrocious proceedings, Jack had done what he called making the house tidy. Gladys again! She had been to see him, with her ma, and had said that it was rather in a mess. So he put away everything that gave the house a jolly, bachelor, charm to a man who came to stay with him, and reduced it all to a dead level of rampant scrubbing brush.

Powerless to prevent the dreadful deed, I had to put up with it, and even to see the knot tied. And then afterwards do you suppose that Gladys felt for me—that she tried to let me down gently? No—not an ounce of sympathy did I get—nor much of a welcome. I had known him when he was a bachelor. That stamped me in her eyes as a dangerous character, and she showed it.

Jack says he is happy as a married man. I don't believe it! I believe he sighs for other days—my days. But they are gone for ever. No more shall I smoke with him till we can't see each other in the cloud! No more shall I tumble

in unasked, but welcome, and bide a little while in restful contemplation of different-sized cups and plates that don't match, and hunks of bread and lumps of pie, and perpetual mutton chops, and fractured chairs and smoky ceilings and stained carpets! No more shall I see gravy helped with a dessert spoon, mint sauce with a tea ditto, and a fork left in the pickles. No more—must I go on now, for I am of a very sensitive disposition, and I really cannot bear it.

MOVING.

WHEN the free-born father of a British family moves from one house to another with his wife and his children and all that he possesses, a preposterous little fiction is usually started that the operation can be effected with the greatest ease and comfort. I have even heard of a case in which a lady accidentally left an article of female apparel which she was adorning (I believe with frills) on the table in the drawing-room of the house out of which she was moving, and found the same article on the same table the same evening in the drawing-room of the house into which she was moving. I am not at all sure that the garment had not meanwhile been aired and the buttons sewn on by the gentleman who had contracted to do the removal.

Gravitating round this leading idea are several lesser beliefs, such as :—

That a move costs next to nothing.

That the old furniture and carpets will do for the new house.

I moved some years ago largely on the strength of these articles of faith. I don't exactly know whether I ever subscribed to them in my inmost heart, but my wife did; and she taught them to me every morning like the catechism before I started for business till I could say the words after

her, and would no more have dared to express a doubt than —well, there, I am married and done for, and it's no good pretending that I am not twisted round her little finger, because I am and I know it. Jones sniggers as he reads this, and thinks what a lord of creation *he* is at home, but he is really twisted much faster than I am, only he doesn't know it—and that's all the difference between Jones and the present writer.

But to come to hard facts; when I had taken the new house and cut off all retreat from the humble residence which had contained me and mine, the real fun began. My wife dropped the proverbs which had previously been my daily meat, and opened up quite a new train of ideas. I give a few specimens.

"These curtains really cannot be put up again in our new drawing-room, dear, because they don't match the paper in the least."

"But can't they be dyed or something?"

"Oh! *no*, darling, they won't take the dye."

"This stair-carpet is really quite thread-bare, dearest, and will only do for the top flight."

"Don't you think, Edward, that while we *are* about it"—we are very much about it—"we had better get a set of new dining-room chairs, and put these shabby old ones into the breakfast-room."

"I'm sure that old wooden bedstead of ours is very unhealthy. Do you know I really think we had better sell it and buy a brass one." Selling it means importing a Jewish gentleman in the trade, who looks at it contemptuously, displays no interest whatever when I mention that my grandmother used to sleep in it fifty years ago, and ultimately remarks

that it is not worth the cost of breaking it up for firewood, but he will give me five shillings for the sake of the deal. I reply indignantly that it is not deal but the best mahogany, and he then makes a guttural sound intended to represent mirth, and intimates that he doesn't mean that sort of deal, but a friendly bargain. As the friendliness of the bargain appears to me to be rather on my side I hold out, but just as I am being very firm, my wife plucks at my sleeve, and I immediately become pulp, and away goes the bedstead. And so on, and so on.

The removing was *not* accomplished with the greatest ease and comfort. Nothing was arranged at all in the new house until I had slept on a billiard-table, washed in a pudding-basin at the kitchen sink, and brushed my hair before the drawing-room mirror for several days. The hall was blocked up, the passages were blocked up, the stairs were blocked up. The curtains could not be put up because they were being dyed somewhere. The carpets could not be put down because they were detained by a person at Battersea, who had contracted solemnly to beat them in one day, and kept them for three weeks. The books were left in heaps on the floor because something had to be done to the book-cases first, and nobody came to do it. The gas could not be used because the fittings were not ready. Everything not wanted for immediate use was in an aggravating state of extreme prominence, and all needful articles were buried under accumulated piles of complicated packages. If I searched in anguish for an umbrella, I could find nothing but a flute. If I hunted for a favourite suit of garments, which had been much admired in the Borough, and other fashionable haunts, I

was rewarded by bringing to light the uniform worn by an ancestor in the Indian army. An effort to dig a hat out of chaos resulted in producing a fancy flower-pot.

We lived, too, during that period in a perpetual state of tripping against something and shooting over it head first into something else. Every solid article that had a sharp corner, or was possessed of protruding features of any kind, was placed just where we did not see it until we fell upon it.

Then the servants turned upon us and said they never would if they had known it. They did not say with particularity what they never would, or describe the exact nature of the information which would have prevented them from doing it, but they left on the mind a general impression that they all considered themselves extremely injured, and, being already low in my spirits, I was quite prepared to believe that I must be an unmitigated brute.

My wife did not join in this mutiny, but she looked at me with mildly reproachful eyes, and murmured at intervals to vacancy what a pity it was that some one (I was some one) could not *make* that man send the carpets, and the other man the curtains, and the carpenter do the book-cases, and the gas man put up the chandeliers, and that she always thought there was a way of getting things done if people were *really* determined (I represented, for the purposes of this remark, a person not really determined), and that when her father and mother moved, she was quite sure it was nothing like this.

To this last observation I replied (while gloomily engaged in eating cold boiled beef with a fish knife and fork on the top of a deal box, and drinking beer out of a hot-water

can), that it lost some of its force from the fact that when her esteemed parents had made their last move, my better-half was of the not very mature age of one year and six months, and therefore not, perhaps, in a position to recall the exact circumstances with accuracy. Hereupon my wife cried, and we spent the remainder of the evening very comfortably in mutual recrimination, wherein we agreed only in expressing the most fervent regret that we had ever crossed each other's paths, &c., &c., &c., and in declaring that we never could possibly entertain again any of those affectionate sentiments which we had once, &c., &c., &c., but that, as we could not undo the fatal tie, we must in society keep up a hollow mockery of outward, &c., &c., &c. Moving is decidedly trying to the temper, but pray don't suppose for a moment that I lost *mine*, whatever my *wife* may have done.

Of course we got over it all in time; but I doubt if I could be induced to repeat the process of moving unless a sheriff's officer were to press it on me as a thing that I really ought to do—in which case, being naturally of an obliging disposition, I have no doubt I should give way.

GIMMEURAT.

UPON a wet and boisterous evening, in the month of April, A.D. 1887, three travellers might have been seen in a compartment of a third class carriage, attached to a train which was journeying, with the punctuality and lightning rapidity always associated in the mind with the London and South-Western Railway Company, from Winchester to London. When I say that they might have been seen, I mean that they might have been seen if there had been any one else in the compartment. There was not, but that is neither here nor there, and I resent carping criticism upon small points of detail.

The tall and well-knit form, the thoughtful countenance, the neat attire, and indescribable air of nobility of one of the three travellers, would at once have marked him, even to the most careless observer, as a person of distinction. That party, I need hardly say, was the present writer—the fact being that I had just deposited a small son at school, and was returning home full of parental emotion.

The other two gents—I call them advisedly gents—were commercial travellers. I opined this immediately I got into the compartment from the circumstance that one of them was leaning fondly upon two large square parcels wrapped in American cloth, and that the other presented unmis-

takable indications of familiarity with railway travelling. He had, for instance, relieved himself of his boots in favour of a pair of carpet slippers, and put the former on the seat beside him, without any apparent sense of the unusual. He had also doffed a chimney pot hat and replaced it by a fearful and wonderful Turkish smoking cap, the tassel of which aimlessly rolled round on a sort of pivot, and bobbed against his nose at intervals. I am obliged to add that he had also unbuttoned the greater part of his waistcoat.

Being somewhat occupied with my own thoughts, and not perceiving in my companions any indications of soul (I did not incline to anything short of soul at the moment), I slunk modestly into a corner when I got in, prepared, like a patent chimney, to consume my own smoke and interfere with nobody else. But it was not to be. The two gents were friendly—very friendly—appallingly friendly—terrifically friendly.

One of them sat opposite to me—the one who leant (not without reason, as will duly appear) on commercial packages. His name was Showler. The other one sat beside me—the slippered one. He was surnamed Gabbit. I got to know this because they addressed each other as such.

I had noticed on entering a sickly sort of spirituous odour, as if some one had been having a warm bath and had put some brandy into it. I had scarcely settled myself when Showler produced from his coat pocket a medicine bottle. I wished he would take some other opportunity of imbibing his mixture "bis in diem," but I felt a little sorry for him and wondered what his complaint was. When he uncorked it, a smell of brandy became at once perceptible, and I then knew what his complaint was, but did not feel sorry for

him. He put it solemnly to his lips, and then handed it to Gabbit—Gabbit put it to his lips and returned it to Showler. Showler then, without a word, proffered the bottle, the neck of which was positively glistening from the recent proceedings—*to me!*

Mingled horror, internal sensations resembling those experienced on a channel steamer, and gratitude, kept me silent for a moment, and then I said that I was much obliged but I did not want any. I could see from the expression on Showler's face that I had fallen in his esteem, but I could bear that—the other alternative I really could not face. This process was repeated exactly whenever Showler wanted a little refreshment himself, which was on an average every quarter of an hour; and each time I had to nerve myself to confront that loathsome medicine bottle without showing what I was feeling internally.

When I first looked at the face of Showler, I was rather struck by an appearance of gravity and wisdom which pervaded it. I soon discovered, however, that he was at the profoundly sapient stage of inebriation. Gabbit rattled away incessantly about shirts and pants, and umbrellas and other professional matters, but Showler talked little. He was evidently a laconic man, naturally accustomed to utter weighty sayings in a small compass, and to have much regard paid to them in commercial circles, and he now still further shortened his remarks by condensing every observation into one compound word. It was a little difficult to follow till one got used to it.

The following examples will give some idea of Mr. Showler's mode of speech :—

Wotsthstashun = What is this Station?

Wharewe = Where are we?
Vugotmashpare = Have you got a match to spare?
Zrainstpdyet = Has the rain stopped yet?

I got on very fairly in my efforts to follow Showler, till he suddenly looked hard at me and said in a tone of profound meaning:—

"GIMMEURAT."

I conned over the puzzle rapidly in my mind, and tried "gimcrack," "what are you at," "Jim had a rat," "gum and that," "ginger the cat." But I could make nothing wise enough for Showler out of it, so I had to say, "I beg your pardon."

"GIMMEURAT," said Showler again rather fiercely. I was completely nonplussed, and reduced to wondering feebly whether Showler had studied Hindustani in early life, as it sounded rather like it.

"I didn't quite catch," I began—

"GIMMEURAT," retorted Showler, and to my extreme surprise and discomfort, he stretched his hand out towards my face as if about to pull my uncommercial nose. But he raised his arm and pointed above my head, and then an inspiration and a cold chill seized me simultaneously. Showler wanted my hat.

It was a very painful dilemma. Showler, if opposed, would certainly become objectionable, and might even be dangerous. On the other hand, to trust my hat to Showler was perilous in the extreme. He might sit on it—throw it at Gabbit, or out of the window—he might even, under some fiendish impulse, pour brandy into it out of that abominable medicine bottle in revenge for my refusal to apply my lips to the same.

Of the two evils, I thought perhaps the lesser would be to entrust my hat to Showler. If I refused, I should certainly offend him, and if I yielded, I should at least have a chance of protecting the article in question from dire injury in case of need. So I took it off my head and handed it to Showler.

He put it down beside him and then began to fumble in his pockets. Ultimately he produced a small and very dirty strip of Brussels carpet—about six inches long perhaps, and one inch wide—and to my renewed surprise and, on the whole, to my relief, he wiped my hat with it solemnly for several minutes. He did it the wrong way at first, but corrected that trifling misapprehension when he realised (which he did very gradually) that the exterior was assuming the appearance of a retriever's coat. Finally he handed it back to me and uttered the longest speech he made during the journey:

"Thishmyatrevivrwshalwscarraboutfndmoshushefl,"

which being interpreted signified, "This is my hat reviver, which I always carry about and find most useful."

Having once turned his thoughts into the channel of personal adornment, Showler very naturally felt a desire to exhibit another contrivance (kept also in his pockets, and apparently constituting, with the hat reviver, his travelling outfit), almost equalling in ingenuity the hat reviver. After gazing abstractedly for a while at Gabbit's boots as they reposed on the seat, he produced a small brush and began to clean them with it. As he subsequently applied it with apparent relish to his own hair, and finally lifted both my legs suddenly on to his lap and brushed my trousers with it, I drew the conclusion that the brush was not nasty

particular, and, like a good servant, did not mind making itself generally useful. But, though these personal attentions were very flattering, I did wish that Showler would leave my trousers alone all the same.

As we neared London, Showler became somewhat uncertain as to his immediate course of action on arriving there, and communed aloud with himself on the subject. He appeared to be tormented with doubts as to the relative advantages of getting out at Vauxhall and at Waterloo, aggravated by the circumstance of his not feeling very clear as to where he wanted to go to. He was also evidently divided in his mind as to the mode of conveyance to which he would resort. This last uncertainty took the form of clasping his packages and muttering repeatedly "Cababus," an expression which seemed to indicate that his preference was hanging in the balance between a cab and an omnibus.

Having, on the whole, had enough of Showler and Gabbit, I was not sorry when the train reached Vauxhall. I bade good evening to them, and my exit was considerably accelerated by seeing Showler look at my hat again, and put his hand in his pocket. I divined that his fearful purpose was to apply the hat reviver as a parting attention, and true enough, as I fled I heard him say in a tone of mingled remonstrance and persuasion:

"GIMMEURAT."

THE UNUTTERABLES.

I WAS President. It is not for me to mention the many qualifications which pointed me out as the right man in the right place, but I may at all events go so far as to say that I discharged the duties of the office to my complete satisfaction. As to the nature of those duties, it is enough for me to remark, somewhat scornfully, that it is the duty of a President to preside.

The first thing we did, of course, was to prepare an elaborate set of rules. No Club, not even a Burial Club, can be be born properly without the assistance of Rules. Ours were drawn up with great solemnity, and, what is more, they were printed at cost price (with an outside cover on which the Tragic Muse was represented, suffering apparently from toothache) by a friend of one of the members who was in the trade. They began in the usual manner by observing "that this Club shall be called the Unutterable Amateur Dramatic Club." The other rules were mostly made up of the expression "Any member who," and there was nothing very particular about them except that we came out strongly in fines. In his secret soul no member intended for a moment to pay a fine, and no member ever did pay one, but it looked well on paper.

We had a Stage Manager and an Acting Manager, and a

Secretary, and a Treasurer, and a Committee, and three wigs, and a lady's "front," and two pairs of grey whiskers, and one pair of superfine ginger-coloured ditto, an imperial moustache, a box of powder, and a pot of rouge, and any amount of spirit gum, and a fearful and wonderful costume which Skipchin presented to the Club. He had worn it at a fancy dress ball, and he said it might come in useful if we ever did a romantic drama of the fourteenth century. We never did, and when the Club went to bla—— but I am going too fast.

The appointment of an Acting Manager was entirely my own idea, but it proved to be rather a mistake of judgment, because we unfortunately selected a fellow who had not the least idea what an Acting Manager had to do. The consequence was that (being an obtrusive ass) he was always interfering with the other officers. After being rebuked for doing so several times, he had the impudence once to turn to me and ask what on earth he *was* meant to do. I considered the matter carefully for a moment, and not seeing my way quite as clearly as I could have wished to give the desired information, I answered in my most crushing manner (compared to which the Nasmyth hammer is as nought) that he ought to be ashamed of such dense ignorance, and that *I* was not going to enlighten him.

When our existence was firmly established (we little thought then that the Club would so soon go to bla—— I really must curb this tendency to anticipate), and most of our ladies' half-crown and gentlemen's five shilling subscriptions were paid up, we made known unto our relatives and friends that we should be happy to act for the benefit of any Charity, deserving or otherwise, in which they might be

interested. But the Charities did not jump at us somehow, and I remember that one man (he was Secretary of some ill-managed Hospital) was offensive enough to say to a cousin of mine, who very kindly told me of it immediately, that the last time there had been an amateur dramatic performance for the benefit of his Charity, the expenses had been £15, 10s. 9d. and the receipts £1, 18s. 2d.

We did not see our way financially to getting up a public performance on our own account, and were beginning to feel rather low about our prospects of dramatic fame, when one day a member told me that he knew a lady who was acquainted with another lady who was interested in a district in an outlying part of London, and had asked the clergyman whether he would like us to act at his Schools, and that the clergyman had said, yes, he would.

A meeting was at once convened, at which we resolved to accept the invitation and to put a three Act play into rehearsal (none of your thirty-five minutes' comediettas for us, thank you !) It took a little time to do that, because everybody wanted a different play, and everybody wanted the best part in whatever play was chosen. But I got over the difficulty with admirable presence of mind by insisting on a right as President to select the Piece and take the best part myself. Which I did.

We all agreed that to do the thing really well, we ought to have several rehearsals; but it required a good deal of tact on my part to fix the dates for them, because most of the evenings that suited the Leading lady were extremely inconvenient to the First old man, and the evenings that fitted both of them were fatal to other members of the company. Finding it hopeless to consult the wishes of all

parties, I selected the evenings on which I had nothing else to do myself, and intimated courteously but firmly that those were the dates on which the company would be expected to attend.

They did not come, though. Some turned up one evening and some another, but never all together except at the last rehearsal of all. The result was that I often had to call Jones or a drawing-room chair my darling Margaret. I have sometimes thought since that the irregular attendance at rehearsals was the first step towards the Club's going to bla—— but again I must control myself.

Our play had several scenes in it, including, among others, the grounds of a nobleman's house; and when the day of the performance drew near, we thought it desirable to send our Stage Manager (in plain clothes) to the Parson to tell him what scenery we should require, to inspect the Schools, and to arrange all details about the programmes and so forth. The confounded Acting Manager of course said it was his place to go, but Warner, the Stage Manager, said that he, the Stage Manager, would see him, the Acting Manager, blowed first; so the latter subsided sulkily into a corner of the room, and muttered something about a fellow's never having a chance.

It was arranged that at our final rehearsal Warner, who was to go that day to the Parson, should report to the Club the result of his mission, and the whole company accordingly assembled in the evening in good time and in a high state of expectation. Warner came in last, and the moment we saw him we all felt extremely uncomfortable. For the countenance of Warner had undergone a transformation from its usually cheerful expression to a look of awful gloom.

For a few moments no one spoke. Then I broke the silence by saying, as brightly as I could (which was about two degrees above Funeral Service point)—

"Well, Warner, you've—you've—been?"

"Oh! yes—*I've* been."

"And arranged about the scenery?"

"The scenery! Ha! ha! ha! Ho! ho! ho!" Warner laughed in a manner that was almost maniacal.

"Is there—anything—wrong about—the scenery?"

"Oh! no—not in the least—there's nothing wrong about it—only there isn't any—that's all."

"ISN'T ANY!" This in a shout from the whole company.

"Not a blooming rag."

"But they'll provide some, of *course*."

"No, they jolly well won't."

"Then are we expected to send it?"

"No, we're not—and they can't put it up if we do, because there's a Mothers' Tea business which will only finish half an hour before we begin, and the place can't be touched till that's over."

A dead silence. We had been picturing out and indoor scenery of the most lavish description, and this was a perfect thunderclap—not a stage thunderclap but the genuine article.

Then I spoke again—in the sort of subdued whisper used in a sick-room—

"But what about the Stage?"

"Isn't one."

"And the Curtain?"

"Haven't got one."

"And the Foot-lights?"

"Won't be any."

"And the Programmes?"

"Don't mean to have 'em."

"And the Room?"

"A beastly hole down a slum. Took me hours to find it, and whenever I asked any one the way the person insisted on walking along with me. By the time I got there I had the whole neighbourhood at my heels."

"But what does the Parson say about having asked us to go and play in such a place? It's an insult."

"Says he thought we were just going to amuse his poor people anyhow; never supposed we should want a stage or scenery or anything else."

We looked at Warner, and then at each other, and then at Warner again, and Miss Chammerly, who was at all times easily moved to Hysterics, gave a little gulp which sounded suspiciously like the first step in the direction of lying down on the floor and shrieking. But after a few moments the ridiculous aspect of the matter was too much for us, and we burst into roars of laughter.

Nobly did we rise to that occasion, and little sign did the Club show of so soon going to bla—— but I must once more refrain from anticipating history. We persuaded the Parson to arrange the Maternal Tea for another day. We secured Foot-lights; rigged up a Curtain; sent all the out-door scenes indoors (Edmonds forgot that once during the piece, and referred incidentally to "this blasted oak," but I fancy the audience only thought he was using a strong expression); took a carpet with us, and turned it the right way up for a nobleman's dining-room, and the wrong way up

for the plebeian parlour of a Coal merchant; we borrowed chairs and tables from the Parson, and carried them from his house to the School-room ourselves in open daylight; we printed a chaste programme at our own expense; we screened off two corners of the School-room, and the ladies dressed behind one and the gentlemen behind the other. And in spite of every disadvantage we played that three Act play from end to end without a hitch. You may call it a hitch if you like that the Curtain first wouldn't go up and then wouldn't come down, and that the Foot-lights went out in the middle. All I can say is that I don't.

We had a large audience, too—as many as the room would hold on the packed herring principle, and some over. Local curiosity had been much roused by the spectacle of the Parson's furniture being carried in procession through the street to the School-room, as if he were going to move into it, and the belief gained ground that something unusual was "up." I won't pretend to say that the piece was *thoroughly appreciated*, because there was a tendency to laugh boisterously in my most pathetic scenes, which I cannot reconcile with a true perception of the depth of meaning in my every *word* and *look*. I noticed too that the common people there rather seemed to fancy Warner's acting more than mine, which showed them to be very poor judges of *really* good acting compared with *weak attempts*. The real truth was, I think, that they were demoralised by the Parson who, with the best of intentions, asked me something about the play, and then attempted, rashly, to enlighten the people with an outline of it before the proceedings began. He became terribly confused in the narrative, and the Club was quite powerless to help him, as

the members were just then behind the two screens with many of their most important garments off. I did get on a chair and put my head over the top of the gentlemen's screen once with intent to make a timely remark, but I was greeted with senseless mirth, and a low person at the back suggested (apparently with reference to my head) having a shy at the cocoa-nut; so I bobbed down again, not in anger or fear, but in sorrow.

It might naturally be supposed from the enthusiasm which we displayed in surmounting the difficulties of that evening, that our Club possessed all the elements of immortality. But it did not. It went to bla—— Patience, I shall soon come to it now. First, Warner resigned the Stage Managership because, when the bills came in after that first performance, some of the members said that instead of buying the foot-lights and curtain he ought only to have hired them, which would have been much cheaper. Then the Secretary resigned because some one said he was no more good than a dummy. Then the Treasurer resigned because, he said, he was always out of pocket, and there was nothing to treasure, and he didn't see it. Then the Acting Manager left the Club because he said he didn't get any acting or managing, and he should like to know what the deuce was the good of it. Then Miss Hopper followed suit because her mamma was particular and didn't like her to be fondled in public, even though it was all in italics in the fondler's part, and he really couldn't help it. Then there was a good deal of unpleasantness merely because I proposed to choose the next piece and take the best part again—one wretched member going so far as to say that I wanted all the fat to myself, though I couldn't act any

better than a cow. Then everybody began to think rehearsals a horrid bore. Then nobody seemed particularly to want us to act anywhere.

From all which causes combined decomposition set in, and before ever I had had another strut upon the boards, the Unutterable Amateur Dramatic Club—at last I may really mention it—went to BLAZES.

LIGHTS OF OTHER DAYS.

NOBODY knows—nobody ever can know—what I went through that evening. I do not mean that I made a secret of it, on the contrary, I talked of nothing else for weeks afterwards. I do mean that it is quite impossible for anybody else to realise it. In trying now to give some faint idea of it, I know that I must fail—but here goes.

You see, I had given up dancing for years; I had had a lot of it in my time; I had had my day of dancing right through the card and all the extras, loving one partner at least madly every time (different partner on each occasion), eating horribly indigestible food and drinking bad champagne at 3 a.m., and getting about two hours and a half in bed. But it was all over long ago. I was married and done for—retired from the business—shutters up—apply next door for the key.

But it fell out that my niece came to stay with us, and my wife and I agreed that we must do what we could to give her a pleasant time, and, after we had taken her to the British Museum, and the Tower, and St. Paul's, and Westminster Abbey, I drifted, somehow or other, into a promise to conduct both of them to a certain subscription ball.

I was not much concerned about my personal appear-

ance myself, but my wife wanted to cut a dash, and, not content with getting a new dress herself (the unpaid bill for which is in a rack in front of me), she must needs turn her attention to me. Was it not high time that I got a new dress suit? said she. No, said I. Mine was very shabby and getting too small across the shoulders and waist, said she. Never mind, said I (I didn't like the last part of that remark, though). How about my patent leather shoes? said she. Nothing particular about them that I was aware of, said I. But she was not to be choked off in that way. She hauled them out into the glare of day, and condemned them mercilessly. I *must* get a new pair of shoes anyhow, said she. As there was that in her eyes which told me that this item was not to be trifled with, I succumbed. Finally, she came to gloves. I proposed to wear a pair of lavenders which I had held in my hands for years at theatres, and concerts, and tea-meetings, and similar entertainments. She would not listen to it. They were only fit for the housemaid to use when dusting the hearth, she said. So they came to that end, and I went to the Ball with a new pair.

Well, the Ball began at 9. We arranged to start at 9.30. We had a most uncomfortable half-and-half scrambling kind of dinner at 6.30, and the moment it was over the ladies went upstairs to dress. Of course, I knew they would take longer than I should, so I sat down to read. But I soon felt unsettled, and I kept looking at my watch, and the fidgets came on badly, and I thought perhaps I had better dress in good time, so I sneaked into my room and donned my evening garb, new shoes and all; and down I came again. Not a sign of the ladies, of course; everything still as death, and the clock getting on defiantly to my usual

time for retiring. Nobody to talk to, nothing to do but wait and think of my bed.

9.30 arrived, and with it the carriage—a most elegant brougham, hired for the occasion. I sent up word to the ladies to announce the fact, and received back an answer that they would be down directly. Then I sat down and waited again. 10 o'clock. Not a sign of the ladies. Thinking that my personal authority might be used with advantage, I ascended the stairs and craved admission to my wife's room. I was told in a voice of some asperity to come in. When I entered I found both ladies in an advanced state of toilette, with the dressmaker and one of the servants engaged in putting the finishing touches. It was evident that the ceremony had not gone smoothly, and that there was in fact much friction on account of various shortcomings and mishaps connected with bands and lacings and what not; and, when I ventured to refer to the fact that the carriage was waiting below, and that the advertised time of departure had been somewhat exceeded, I received an answer from all four females at once, in which concentrated irritation was so conspicuous that I vanished in haste.

I sat down and walked about downstairs for another half-hour in ghostly silence and extreme depression of spirits, and then I heard a rustling on the stairs, which denoted that the ladies were descending. Perhaps, if you are not married you may think that we started at once: if so, you are egregiously mistaken. First, there was complicated wrapping up in the hall, then when my precious charges were in the carriage they vied with each other in remembering the things they had forgotten. My

wife led off with her fan, my niece followed with her lace handkerchief, and there they went one after the other, and the servants shot in and out of the house and up and down the stairs as if they were playing "touch" with the carriage. However, we did get off at last.

I sat on a very small seat with my back to the horses (there were two horses, if you please, for this occasion only) and tried to avoid crushing the ladies' dresses, but, judging from my wife's remarks, I failed to do so, and appeared to her to be all knees, though I made myself hideously uncomfortable in my efforts to shrink into nothing.

When I put my new shoes on they seemed beautifully comfortable. Had they felt otherwise—had they given me the slightest warning before I left home and burnt my ships of what was to follow—I should have discarded them in favour of my old ones a thousand times over before I would have faced it. But no, the deceitful brutes lulled me into false security and showed no sign of their true character until we were half way there: and then they began. First a shooting pain in one toe, then in another: then a feeling that the shoes were gradually getting smaller and smaller, and my feet larger and larger: then more shooting pains: then a dull continuous ache commencing in each foot and gradually spreading up the leg: then a compound of dull pains and acute pains all up me, varying like a kaleidoscope, not as to the total quantity, but as to the exact situation of the component pieces of pain, whenever I stood up or walked or moved in any way. Had any one, when I reached that stage, suggested taking my shoes off in order that he might bastinado my feet, or

adminster the rack in moderation, I should have thanked him for the relief at the moment, whatever I might have thought about it afterwards.

I referred to the fact of my being provided with new gloves. When I put them on in the carriage, one of them split the whole way down the back of the hand, exhibiting thereby a large section of knuckle and hand. It appeared to me that every one kept looking at the fracture for the rest of the evening, and that the exposed bit of hand was getting redder and redder in consequence.

The Ball was in full swing when we arrived, and notwithstanding tight boots and split glove, I began to feel a light of early days come over me like a retired circus horse on hearing a brass band. In short, I wished to dance. And what is more, I tried to dance. But there, I might as well have thought of leading an army with crossbows for weapons against the Germans under Moltke. Step! Why, bless you, there was no step in it. When I used to dance, you took your partner honestly round the waist, and with a one, two, three, went round and round like a top till you were so giddy that you could not go on, and had to lean against the wall; but now they all dance as if there was a baby in the next room and they were afraid of waking it—a sort of duck-in-a-decline performance: *I* can't do it. I tried one lady, and she looked at me with a gentle reproach, as if she had caught me stealing her watch, but did not want to prosecute. And then I tried another, who went once round with me, and then snapped out, with her lips drawn very fine—"That she would rather sit out, please," and sat out, looking steadily away from me, and replying to my middle-aged gallantries with sickening monosyllables. And then I asked a third; but

she seemed to have followed my previous career and recorded my convictions, for she would not have me at any price—did not even go through the form of saying that she was engaged. And then I hung about the refreshment room and drank bad claret cup, a miserable man, with my vanity hurt, my feet more hurt still, and an awful longing upon me to go home to bed.

Go home, did I say? Why, my niece had partners for all the dances on the programme, and for all the extras that could, should, or might by any possibility be danced; and wild horses would not have taken her away. And my wife was just as much pleased as the girl, and sat there as if it were perfect bliss to repose against a wall and look at people dancing in that feeble fashion. When I hinted to her that it was time to be thinking of going (which I did, to the best of my belief, seven and twenty times), she merely looked at me with a kind of pitying smile, as if I were a harmless lunatic whom she desired to treat kindly because she had once known my mother.

It could not last for ever, though it went as near to it as it could, and there came a time when in broad daylight, and exquisite agony in the lower extremities, I tottered out with my two ladies, who had suddenly collapsed, and passed on leaving the marble halls from seraphic smiles into a condition of most earthly temper. I could not find the carriage for some time, because the driver did not know my name, and when the linkman roared it out, he took not the smallest notice. But at last he caught sight of me, and as though suddenly recalling some old convict's association, he inquired if I was 28. I was 28, and we got in.

How we all did go on at each other in that carriage. I

was really quite cross myself—I really was; and as for the ladies—there, it was something awful the way they went for each other, and then combined to go for me.

At length to bed at about 4 a.m. To rise at 7 a.m. To go through the day's work with nodding head and aching legs. To feel that I really ought not to have done it; that it was not in my line, and that I was not the young man that I had once known and admired. And now to declare that before I do it again, I may confidently be relied upon to bake my best Sunday hat and consume it with horse-radish sauce and Spanish onions.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS.

NOT for one moment would I do away with them, though I never get any myself—except Christmas Day, when I eat and drink too much, and Boxing Day when I am sorry for it. I only venture to remark that when my sons come home from school at that festive season, they do, in various ways, make it warm for their indulgent father and devoted mother.

After an exchange of embraces, too sacred to be dragged here into public life (though for that matter it generally begins on the front door-step), my offspring plunge headlong into a wild career of personal enjoyment, without regard for my pocket, my nerves, or my household gods.

They usually draw first blood (if I may be permitted to use that prize-fighting figure of speech) at the greengrocer's. After a rapid look round, and a war whoop indicative of personal satisfaction, they suddenly make a plunge for their hats, and disappear out of the house. In about half an hour they return laden with paper bags, on which I perceive a printed name only too familiar to me in connection with a red-covered book, and they show obvious traces of having carried home a good deal inside as well. They generally offer me a tamarind orange out of one of these bags, and appear to regard the proceeding in the light of

making me a rather handsome present, though for this and all similar offerings, I have to pay when the book comes in on the following Tuesday. It is not, perhaps, wonderful that when I pass my greengrocer's shop in about the middle of December, and he happens to be standing at his door, he smiles affably, and remarks, "You'll be avin' the young gents 'ome soon, sir."

When I come down to breakfast on the first morning after my sons have arrived, I find their two heads close together inside the morning paper. From this I draw the infallible conclusion that they hunger for an immediate taste of some more or less expensive form of public entertainment, and that the only open question is where it is to be. It takes some time for them to agree on this head—long enough to deprive me of the only opportunity I get during the day of looking at the paper myself—and ultimately they fix on one amusement, and comfort themselves for the pain of having to discard others, by the reflection that they can go there afterwards. The paternal hand is expected to be submissively put into the paternal pocket, and a donation of silver is received as if it represented payment of a debt long overdue.

Among home amusements, the magic lantern is a most ingenious and delightful plaything, and my boys are very fond of it. It requires, however, certain accompanying arrangements which, from the parental point of view, may justly be described as inconvenient. Thus, it does not make the heart bound with joy to see one of your best sheets ruthlessly dragged forth, a pair of steps taken into the drawing-room, the sheet nailed with tacks into the ornamental wood-work of an arch between the front and

back rooms, and splashes of water made at and round it from a pail. Neither does it make the bosom swell with gratitude when, as you sit looking by compulsion for the twenty-fifth time upon a policeman apparently following up a lion in a detective spirit and pursued by a tree, the vision suddenly disappears, a crash is heard, one operator calls the other operator a fool, an awful smell pervades the room, and you realise in the gloom of total darkness that the magic lantern has upset, and that the oil from the lamp is trickling over the new carpet.

Naturally, in holiday time, boys do not care to write much. But mine are generally moved to paint in coloured letters a few classical sentiments appropriate to the season, such as—

> "Christmas comes but once a year,
> With good roast beef and lots of beer;"

or—

> "Here is Christmas, oh! my eyes,
> Won't I tuck in at the mince pies."

Nothing can be more harmless than these effusions from the depths of an expectant abdomen, but the drawback about them is that they involve an assault on my study, the ransacking of every drawer that can possibly contain a large sheet of paper, and the spreading of painting materials all over the apartment. It is needless to add that when the poetic inspiration is gratified a rush is made out of the room again, and not the slightest pretence made of clearing up the mess, or taking away any of the foreign materials collected for the occasion.

I am distinctly in favour of boys learning some handicraft, and have found my own unequalled capacity for driving a

nail into a wall without hitting my own thumb more than once in every three times most useful. But the pursuit of carpentering as a holiday amusement does not appeal to my tenderer feelings. There is a room in my house called the boys' room. In that room they are at perfect liberty to do anything they please, and to make as much litter as the room will hold. Do you suppose that they ever go inside it? If you do, your boys must be singularly unlike my boys. They prefer the drawing-room, dining-room, breakfast-room, study—any room but their own. They like sympathetic spectators to behold all they do. If they set to work to make a box (never finished by any chance) for their mother, they desire their mother to behold them at it, to hear the hammer, to see the splinters flying, to perceive how the box is gradually taking shape, whence they convert any room but the right one into the similitude of a workshop at the shortest notice—and so leave it.

The dramatic instinct has always been strong upon me. I once wrote a play myself, and I began squeezing for the pit on my own account at an age which I should really not like to mention, lest it should be considered a reflection on my parents. The spirit has passed by inheritance to my own sons, and in the Christmas holidays they not only insist on going to the theatre, but they compose little plays for themselves, which they act with great spirit. These plays are "put on" with the greatest care, and no trouble (my trouble) or expense (my expense) is spared. If the plot involves the appearance of a gentleman in evening costume, my one and only fondly cherished dress suit is put under requisition, and I, as a spectator in the stalls, see the tails of the coat dragging on the ground, taking little

consignments of oil from the foot-lights, and being trodden on at intervals. Similarly the personation of a female character implies a free resort to my wife's wardrobe for articles mentionable and unmentionable. To convey realistically the idea of excessive stoutness, my pillow is taken from my bed. To present the incidents of mature age, my spectacles are abstracted without hesitation. To do justice to a bedroom scene, my superlative dressing-gown (originally worn by one of the early Popes, and purchased by me in Monmouth Street in a passing moment of prosperity) is put on by one player and hauled at violently by the other. Paint, chalk, spirit gum, rouge, and false whiskers and moustaches are used copiously, and are generally dotted about on the staircase to the terror of passers-by. Arrangements for hanging an improvised curtain up and down involve the permanent ruin for all other purposes of the article used.

As the holidays draw towards a close, my sons, having worn out most of their and my available resources, are apt to find the time hanging rather heavy, and become a little peevish. As I am about to start off in the morning at this period, they will asail me in the hall, and ask "What they are to do to-day, father?"

"Oh! I don't know," I reply cheerfully; "but you're sure to find something. Have you done your holiday task yet?"

No, they haven't, and they give me to understand that they do not regard that inquiry as bearing on the subject in the least.

"Well, I should take a good walk if I were you."

"Walking is so stale."

"I thought you were making a box or something for your mother?"

"We dropped that long ago. It wouldn't come right."

"Well, I don't mind paying for your admission, if you like to go, to the Japanese Village."

"We've been there four times already."

"Can't you find something to read?"

"We don't care about reading: it's so jolly slow."

"Go and see your friend, Bobbles, and get him to do something with you."

"He went back to school yesterday."

"Perhaps mother can find something for you."

"No, she can't, we asked her till she's sick of the sight of us."

"How would you like to go and get some oranges? You have this moment finished an enormous breakfast; but that circumstance is, I know, immaterial."

This seems to suggest a gleam of daylight, but not much.

"We don't care about oranges, we've had such a lot; but perhaps, if you'd give us a bob, we might get something else, and then go and shoot cats with a saloon pistol."

I give them a bob, and am allowed to depart, leaving them to pursue their humane and exciting pastime. I say humane advisedly, because they never hit a cat, though I believe the bullets occasionally whizz past the head of the cook next door. I say exciting, because great results are always expected to follow.

. . . . . .

Ah! well, I don't think I would like to be cross-examined about these grievances of mine. I might have to admit

that the bright young faces of my children touch chords in my heart of hearts that nothing else could awake. It may be that they help me to retrace now and again the weary expanse which divides me from early days of eager hope and boundless faith, and infinite capacity for happiness. It may be that I would rather—a thousand times rather—see my house invaded, my furniture treated with scant reverence, my choicest possessions and most orderly arrangements turned upside down, my bills inordinately swelled, my ready money pass away as wheat through a sieve, than that the young lives around me should be otherwise than joyous.

BAGGS'S POEM.

BAGGS loved. Many people have done it before. I have myself, for instance, until my heart is scarred all over like a Waterloo veteran. Many people will do it again. I ought not, for reasons that I absolutely decline to mention, but I daresay I shall, being still very susceptible and quite unable to withstand blue eyes, when shaded with long lashes, and accompanied by chestnut hair. But over all the people that ever did, could, would, or might love, Baggs simply towered in the immensity of his adoration. At least he used to tell me so whenever I looked in upon him at his chambers in Gray's Inn. He was so free, so unconstrained in his confession of the fact, that I really used almost to expect him to have it painted on the door outside, under his name.

MR. T. B. BAGGS

IN LOVE.

ALL GOOD LISTENERS ARE WELCOME.

"My dear fellow," Baggs used to say to me as we sat sipping—lemonade, I think it was, but am not quite sure—"it is awful; I can't think of anything else, talk of anything else, eat, drink, or sleep anything else, but *her*. She

is, oh! she is—" and then words would fail him, and I generally saw nothing but the whites of his eyes for about five minutes as he sat gazing at a rather smoky ceiling in ecstatic contemplation.

I don't think Baggs had ever really had it before, and that is probably why he took it so severely. I was very fond of him, and I did my best to comfort him. I told him how madly I had loved myself, on occasions too numerous to mention; how very bad I was at first, and how much better I had been in later attacks. But he brushed it all aside. He knew I meant kindly, he quite believed that I thought I was talking to the point, BUT the analogy failed miserably, because I had never loved as he (Baggs) did, or I should not be there philosophically sipping —ginger-beer I think it was then—and talking so calmly of attachments of the heart. For him there was only one woman on earth, and there never could be another while the sun rose and set, and the moon regularly performed its duty. The name of that woman (he always breathed it softly as if he were in church telling some one the number of the hymn) was Rosina Cookson.

Baggs's worldly prospects were not brilliant. His father was a professional man, and Baggs himself had been let loose on the world as an architect and surveyor. His principal opportunities in that line lay, however, at present, in designing castles in the air, and surveying the prospect from his windows, which being on the top floor, were very conveniently situated for that purpose. Rosina Cookson, on the other hand, was the only child of a wealthy city merchant. Hence there was a deep gulf of impecuniosity between them, and Baggs had not dared to approach

Rosina's father as a suitor, though he had made known his love to Rosina herself behind a glass case containing minerals, at a Conversazione, when the band was playing conveniently loud, and had received the blissful intelligence that he was not indifferent to her, but on the contrary, rather dearer than life itself.

Naturally he was of rather a practical turn of mind than otherwise, but this affair had transformed him utterly. He ceased to have his hair cut, and persuaded it into a channel running down the back of his neck. He took to reading poetry aloud. He asked all sorts of extraordinary questions —such as, for instance, my opinion on the subject of two hearts beating as one on a dust heap, considered with reference to the alternatives of lonely splendour in alabaster halls, dotted with porphyry vases, or unsympathetic natures surrounded by hangings of velvet and cloth of gold. He also took to writing verses, and got me (being a very old friend) to help him with a rhyme when he could not find the word. As he was not strong in versification, this generally resulted in our doing it, if I may use the homely expression, one up the other down.

Thus, on one particular, and as it turned out, memorable occasion, Baggs might have been seen in a dreadful state of poetic frenzy, spread all over the table, while I sat in a corner smoking a pipe and putting my lips occasionally to a glass of—toast and water on that occasion I believe.

Baggs loquitur—"*Rosina Cookson.*

Me— "*Whoever looks on*

[Baggs, parenthetically, "Thanks, old fellow, that comes in fine."]

Baggs—"*Your lustrous eyes and beauty rare,*

["Bravo" from me, upon which Baggs looks up blushing, and says he's awfully glad I like it, and inks his left cheek steadily while getting steam up for the next line.]

Baggs—"*Is bound to say,*

[Baggs looks at me doubtfully, and I shake my head and say that I think it sounds a little too colloquial. Baggs thereupon scratches it out and inks his shirt collar.]

Baggs—(after a pause) "*Must ever say:*

Me— "*Ah, well a day!*

Baggs—"*Oh, maid, I love thee sair!*

"Don't you think 'sair' sounds a little like an abbreviation for 'Sarah,' Baggs?"

Usually (at this period) the mildest of mortals, Baggs fires up and says, quite sharply, "nonsense," adding that it is a well-known Scotch word often brought into English poetry. As he is the showman of this poem, I protest no more, and we proceed to verse 2. I always let Baggs begin, his weak point being, as I observed, the rhyming part of the business.

Baggs— "*This heart doth yearn*

Me— "*Its fate to learn*

Baggs—"*From those sweet lips of thine.*

Baggs— "*Oh, will you be,*

Me— "*Rosina C.,*

Baggs triumphantly—"*Near Marble Arch at nine.*"

"My dear Baggs," I interrupt rather warmly, "I really did not know you were leading up to an appointment in Hyde Park as if you were a life-guardsman, and she a nursemaid. Besides, it's wrong, anyhow, because you ought not to ask her to go there at such an hour."

"Of course not, I was not thinking of any one going there

at all. You little know my Rosina if you suppose that she would meet me secretly late in the evening."

"Then why on earth"——

"It just seemed to fit in somehow, but I see now it won't do, so I'll scratch it out."

So the Marble Arch came out, and, after some consideration, the following noble line was substituted—

"*For aye and ever mine.*"

I kept a copy of these verses because I thought they were rather neat, and might come in useful to me some day. But in all my vicissitudes I have never really loved any young person named Cookson, and that is an indispensable starting-point for the first line. Attractive parties by that name are invited to send in early applications for my affections, addressed under cover to the circulating library round the corner.

Well, this is how things went on. Baggs seemed to get worse and worse, but could not summon up his courage to disclose the state of his heart (I must admit that it was in rather a complicated condition of fatuous adoration) to her father, though he was always going to do it, and we composed together any number of letters that he got very hot over in the evening, and almost ran away from in the morning. But accident brought about what I verily believe design would never have accomplished.

I was making my way to Baggs's chambers one evening, and was half way up the stairs, when I heard an unfamiliar voice speaking in a high tone, and Baggs apparently engaged in biting the dust, of which there is plenty in those parts, as this deponent knows from having lived in the neighbourhood at a remote period of English history.

A few stairs more and I could hear distinctly what was said. What is more, I did hear it—not in prying curiosity, but because I felt very much for Baggs.

"Do you consider, sir, that it is an honourable thing for a young man in your position" [there was a pause, and I instinctively knew that the speaker stopped to survey, contemptuously, Baggs's furniture, which was not ducal in quality, or overpowering in quantity, poor old chap]—"I say in your position, and visiting my house as a friend, to pay secret addresses to my daughter? Eh, sir, eh?"

Baggs's tone of tribulation would have melted a stone as he began—

"Indeed, sir, I meant"——

"Meant, indeed, I don't believe a word of it. I look at acts, not what people tell me they mean. And that is not all, sir. Not content with this deception, you turn the poor girl's head with this wretched stuff that, I suppose, you call poetry and I call idiotic rubbish. This thing that I found addressed to my daughter." [There was a rustle as of a paper brought out, and then Rosina's papa read in a most offensive tone.]

"*Rosina Cookson,*
Whoever looks on
Your lustrous eyes and beauty rare,
Must ever say
Ah! well a day."

"Pah! What in the name of common sense should anybody want to go on saying 'Ah! well a day,' because he meets my daughter in the street, I should like to know, sir? Eh, sir, eh?"

"I beg you to believe, sir, that I do love your daughter

most truly, indeed I do, and that it was only a weak and silly feeling of timidity that prevented me from confessing all to you."

I broke into the room then—I could not help it—and before the old gentleman could ask who the deuce I was, I went for him like a bull at a gate, and said I could not help having heard part of the conversation, and that Baggs really was a most good and honourable fellow, and was dying of love for Miss Rosina, and that he was a very clever architect and surveyor who only wanted opportunity to architect and survey every other architect and surveyor into fits, and that I begged he would forgive a very old friend for speaking up for him. And as for verses, I said that Baggs had never been taken that way before, and I was quite sure that he would never do it again, and would have his hair cut immediately, and that he really was, naturally, a most practical sort of a fellow, who would no more think of saying "Ah! well a day" more than once (if that) than I should of asking a Polar bear to tea. Furthermore, that I knew he had been meaning to speak or write to Mr. Cookson for months, and had only been deterred by the fear of being thought capable of mercenary motives, which I declared to be the last thing on this earth that anybody who knew Baggs would accuse him of.

. . . . . .

We did it between us. We conquered him fairly, and half an hour afterwards he was sitting on the only really sound chair smoking a cigar, and drinking—well, on that one occasion, I think the whisky was brought out. And the next Sunday as ever was, Baggs dined there as the recognised lover of Rosina Cookson, and I was there too, by

special invitation. And when we came away (I had to wait outside for him about a quarter of an hour while his Rosina helped him not to find his hat) he wrung my hand for the five hundredth time and said it was all my doing, though he rather wished I had not thought of that line, "Ah! well a day," because it really was a little silly when you came to think of it, and talked a good deal of other pleasant nonsense about the sacred altar of undying friendship, and all the rest of it. But there, anything can be excused to a man in that condition.

BINDLE'S RIVER PICNIC.

THE steam launch is not beloved by those who go down to the Thames to row in boats, or paddle in canoes, or fish in punts. It occasionally causes them to go down into the Thames also, and it always irritates them by its ostentatious display of superior power, its total disregard of all other objects but its own immediate wishes where locks are concerned, and its abominable back wash. Theoretically I hate a launch at all times. Practically I do not object to it when I am on board myself. I was on board when Bindle gave a picnic on his launch, because he asked self and lady to go, and she (that is, lady) never refuses a good thing, or allows me to do so where she cannot with convenience and propriety go alone.

Bindle had asked a party which numbered, in all, sixteen. It filled the launch up pretty full. Some of us, for instance, had to lean against the funnel and roast slowly; while as an opposite extreme an elderly female, who in a general way did for Bindle at home as housekeeper, and on this occasion officiated in the commissariat department, sat to the best of my belief on the ice-pail when not otherwise particularly engaged.

We started at Maidenhead—with claret-cup. If I were asked to specify any period of the day afterwards at which

we were not consuming some form of eatable or drinkable, I should only be able to pledge myself with certainty to the moment when the launch caught against a projection in a lock and heeled over sideways. Even then my wife had a chocolate cream in her mouth which she could not well get rid of, though I will say for her that in that awful moment she most kindly and considerately clasped my hand and said I should go down with her. The launch was quickly righted, and then the colour returned to pale cheeks, and champagne became a pressing necessity.

Besides self and lady there was another married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Boulter, who, like ourselves, were not chickens, and yet another married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Taplow, who unlike ourselves and the Boulters were chickens, having in fact been living happily ever afterwards for not more than six weeks or so. The other ten consisted of Mathews, who was a widower; Mrs. Murray, who was a widow; Mrs. Reekie, a married lady minus her husband; Mr. Edwards, a married gentleman without his wife; the three Misses Watson; Bindle himself, who was rather a veteran bachelor, and Tubbin and Nuttle, who were afflicted with the same complaint but had not had it for nearly so long, and judging from their behaviour seemed very anxious to leave it off.

We were rather stiff at first. We spoke in low voices, and I talked to Mrs. Boulter about the weather, and I believe Boulter chose the same subject for earnest conversation with my wife. But Bindle was an admirable host, and speedily put us all at our ease. He began by taking out of a box button-hole flowers, which he dealt all round, and this naturally gave rise to polite little attentions and floral conversation. Then he dived into the same box and brought

out fans for all the ladies, which put them in quite a flutter of pleased surprise. Then he disappeared into the box again and out came a great bottle of eau-de-cologne, which was passed all round and scented us beautifully. So what with Bindle's inexhaustible box, and the claret-cup, and the lovely day, and the movement of the launch, we all unbent and talked and laughed away as fast as we could; and from sitting demurely down in one place and speaking only to the next person, most of us began to move about as well as space would permit, and seat ourselves in all kinds of different combinations. I say most of us, because Edwards was distinctly saturnine, and also because even thus early in the day the youngest Miss Watson and Nuttle seemed drawn to each other, and Nuttle looked quite hurt when somebody else asked the youngest Miss Watson whether she would take some more claret-cup. Tubbin and the second Miss Watson got quite as bad afterwards, but it did not come on so early with them.

And so we journeyed on till we reached Medmenham Abbey, where we lunched, and then wandered about in little groups (very often a little group consisted of one gentleman and one lady), and then assembled together and got on board to come back again. And I have scampered rapidly to that point, because it is a well-known circumstance that the interest of a picnic centres almost entirely in the later part of the proceedings, and upon my honour I don't remember a single incident worthy of note that happened until the sun was sinking, and we were fairly on the way home.

I could see at lunch that Mathews had something on his mind. Whether he wished to unburden himself of a crime,

or tell a story, or make a speech, I could not satisfy myself, but that he was in a state of suppression was perfectly evident to me. Well, when we got on board out it came. He was sitting in the fore part of the launch, over which there was an awning, when he suddenly rose, and as he was rather tall and the awning was rather low his head appeared in a manner to go into it and prop it up. He did not seem to like the job at all, but for some inscrutable reason he appeared to regard it as a mission that he should propose Bindle's health.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I thank we ought to think, I mean I think we ought to thank our kind host, Mr. Bindle, for his kind hospitality in so kindly asking us all to this kind picnic to-day, and I beg to propose his health." And then Edwards came down from the awning and blushed horribly. Of course we were all obliged to drink Bindle's health, though most of us thought the proceeding foolish, and Bindle obviously looked on it as a horrid bore. He made no pretence of a speech, but said "Thanks awfully—very glad to see you all," which perhaps expressed as much as a good many people would have spread over twenty minutes.

"Now then," said Bindle cheerily, "who is going to do something to amuse us? Come, Boulter, I know you can sing a song."

Of course Boulter said he couldn't sing a note, and of course he was pressed with a good many "do pleases," and of course then he consented. He sang in a fruity tenor, "See our oars with feathered spray." I think he had an idea that it was in some way appropriate to the occasion, but as Mrs. Reekie whispered to me, there

was a good deal more spray than oar about our mode of progression.

I think it was just at this period that the second Miss Watson felt faint. The glare of the sun on the water and the motion of the boat had upset her (I say nothing of the salmon or champagne, because it is not for me to throw stones) and she succumbed. She was tenderly supported into the saloon, where an impromptu couch was made for her, and Bindle's housekeeper, who had once been a professional nurse, immediately hung a wet table cloth across the saloon, and set to work with an immense air of importance to produce as nearly as possible the appearance of a fever ward. She walked about during this proceeding and afterwards in a pair of creaking boots, with a step which aggressively called every one to witness that a feather could not be more noiseless. I fancy that the second Miss Watson's head must have been propped up by putting a large melon under it, which I had been eyeing with expectancy at intervals during the day, with a cloak for the pillow-case. Anyhow Bindle was hunting about for that delectable fruit in vain, and I really don't see where you can lose a melon in a steam launch unless some one gets on the top of it.

This unfortunate incident had a great effect on Tubbin's spirits. He hovered about at the stern with a most melancholy expression of countenance, and divided his time between going into the saloon (to the profound irritation of Bindles' housekeeper, who 'ssssshed' every time like an old goose) to ask the second Miss Watson how she was getting on, and whether he could do anything for her, and sighing heavily with his face over the edge of the vessel as if he did not feel quite the thing himself.

I will not say that this occurrence spoilt our amusement, but rather that it turned it into a minor key. Mrs. Murray, for instance, who was an accomplished reciter, on being asked to give her celebrated humorous Irish piece, requested leave to substitute the "Execution of Montrose." Nuttle, who had brought a banjo with him, for the express purpose of singing comic songs, could on no account be persuaded even to bring out the instrument, such was the subdued state of his feelings; and Bindle was reduced to asking Edwards, who was at no time more lively than a funeral, whether he would oblige with a song. Edwards readily complied, seeming in fact rather anxious to unburden himself of a few melancholy reflections, and favoured us with the following not very hilarious ditty in a tune appropriate to the words:—

"Oh! how can we sing and be merry to-day
When to-morrow we may be but grass,
How spend the short hours in laughter and play
That glide by us—alas! and alas!

Those who walked on the earth that so gaily we tread
Were as bright and as joyous as we,
Where, where are they now? Echo answers us "Dead,"
And their faces no more will you see.

As it has been with them, to us it will fall,
Whose brief drama is now running on,
And when manager time for new actors shall call,
We perforce must pack up and be gone.

Why put on the rouge, then? Why dress for the part?
Why dream of love, pleasure, or fame?
A few sands in the glass, a few beats of the heart,
And then but a shadow—a name!"

No one spoke but Bindle when Edwards finished, and even his voice sounded sepulchral as he said—

"Thanks, Edwards, awfully. It's not a very festive song, though, is it? Makes one rather creepy."

"I am not given to festive songs," replied Edwards dismally. And to do him justice he certainly did not look as if he were.

Bindle evidently felt that if something cheerful were not produced now we should all go home crying, so he made a moving appeal to Nuttle, who was sitting in a far corner talking in whispers to the youngest Miss Watson.

"Come, come, Nuttle, we are not going to be brought up to a high pitch of excitement by seeing you come on board with a banjo, and then get nothing for our money. Tune up, old fellow."

Nuttle looked as if he did not like being interrupted. But when the youngest Miss Watson chimed in and murmured tenderly, "Yes, please do, Mr. Nuttle," he started off for his banjo as if his life depended on it.

"A lively one, please," quoth Bindle as Nuttle was settling down, "just to take the taste of that last one out of our mouths—though we're awfully obliged to you, Edwards, all the same."

Nuttle tuned his banjo. I wish people would not tune instruments immediately before playing, or would go behind somewhere, or get under something to do it. I suppose they cannot help themselves, but I hate it.

Then Nuttle assumed the accustomed sedentary posture, wide apart legs, and anxious countenance of the banjo player. And then he trolled out this—

"I will sing to you a most peculiar song,
Not particularly short nor very long,

Of a place I've heard about
Where they turn things inside out,
It's all true without a doubt—
Pom—Pom—Pom.

In that place the moon shines hard all day and night,
While the sun contributes not a farthing light,
And the twinkling little star
Smokes a tenpenny cigar,
While you wonder what it are—
Pom—Pom—Pom.

There they always start house-building with the tiles,
And fix up the basement on the top with piles,
Put the garden down the wall,
And the parlour in the hall,
In the cellar give a ball—
Pom—Pom—Pom.

When they eat or drink they stand upon their heads,
They make soup from legs of chairs and feather beds,
They like saw-dust with their meat,
And chew carpet for a treat,
And drink vitriol quite neat—
Pom—Pom—Pom.

They mix cocoa with champagne and olive oil,
They put sherry in the kettle for to boil,
And for salad they use coke,
Interspersed with planks of oak,
Which are put in tea to soak—
Pom—Pom—Pom.

The male attire's a night-gown and a bonnet,
The female a frock-coat with etchings on it,
But the gents in full dress wear
China vases in their hair,
And a dust-pan here and there—
Pom—Pom—Pom.

The butcher sells acidulated drops,
And the undertaker deals in mutton chops,

And the lawyer cures all ills,
While the doctor draws up wills,
And the parson gin distils—
Pom—Pom—Pom.

At six months they do Greek and Latin verses,
Which are taught by all the babies to their nurses,
When they're fifty they may play
With tin soldiers all the day,
And roll over in the hay—
Pom—Pom—Pom.

If you'd like yourself this country for to see,
Stop up late and drink some extra strong Bohee,
Then eat beef-steak underdone,
With cucumber and Bath-bun,
And proceed to bed at one—
Pom—Pom—Pom."

Nuttle finished amid much laughter and applause, and his cheerful effort decidedly raised our spirits — saving Edwards, who cultivated the other thing in a professional kind of way, and was evidently not going to be happy to please anybody. Why Bindle asked him I'm sure I don't know, but I fancy he had been entertained by Edwards at one or two tomblike repasts.

And now Bindle turned on me and said I must do something to help. So I hesitated and was lost, and murmured that I could not sing or recite, but that rather than do nothing I would tell a story. The offer was accepted with acclamations, and every one settled to listen. Even the second Miss Watson, who felt better and had got rather tired of Bindle's housekeeper, I fancy, was led gently to a seat by Tubbin.

Now you must know that my wife, though possessing angelic virtues far too numerous to mention, has her draw-

backs. One of them is an irrepressible habit of interrupting me when I am telling a story—by which I mean a narrative and not a fib—with a running fire of absolutely unimportant corrections. They only serve to put me off the plot and to aggravate me—yes, I admit, to aggravate me beyond endurance. I was obliged once at a dinner-party to throw my finger-glass at her, and even then she dodged it and broke in again a moment afterwards. It was with a secret apprehension of her displaying this objectionable feature in her character that I commenced on the present occasion, but I hoped that the soothing influences of a summer evening, and the circumstance that she was at the moment eating strawberries, would combine to give me a free passage out. So I began:—

"The name of this story is "Gretchen of Coblentz," from which you will infer that the scene is laid in Germany. It is an old legend of the Rhine, and the occurrence is supposed to have taken place in the early part of the fourteenth century."

"Wasn't it nearer the middle, dear?" interposed my wife sweetly.

"I think not, my love. Well, you must know that there was a powerful baron in those parts whose name was Dropstitchenhausen, and who lived in feudal style in his own castle. He had an only daughter, Gretchen, who was most exquisitely beautiful, and was madly loved by every cavalier who cast eyes on her. When the story opens she was just eighteen years old"——

"Seventeen, dear," murmured my wife as well as she could with a strawberry in her mouth.

"No, eighteen."

"I'm sure you said seventeen before."

"Did I? Well, perhaps I did, but it doesn't much matter. Let's see, where was I? Oh! I was telling you about the daughter. Well, she was asked in marriage by all sorts of suitors, wealthy, powerful, and handsome, and duels were fought and poems were sung about her. But she turned a deaf ear to all, and declared that nothing would induce her to leave her father, who, although a most fierce and bloodthirsty warrior, with a voice like thunder, and a swagger awful to behold, was dotingly fond of her."

"You forgot, my dear," my wife remarked, "to say that her mother had died when Gretchen was an infant."

"Indeed I hadn't. I was just going to say so when you spoke."

"Oh! All right, Eddie, but when you told it last time you mentioned that quite at the beginning, so I naturally thought you had forgotten it."

"Now the Baron Dropstitchenhausen," I went on, "like most feudal nobles, had a good many enemies. He seldom spent the day without a preliminary skirmish, a sally, and a pitched battle, and had so often to be up in the night to ward off an attack, or make one on his own account, that he always went to bed in his armour. But of all his antagonists the most determined and constant by far was another baron named Lechtrichtliten. It was said that in early life they had been rivals for the hand of the lady who married Baron Dropstitchenhausen, and that the unsuccessful suitor had never forgiven the fortunate one even when the innocent cause of their enmity died. But whatever the cause, it was a fact that there was a deadly feud

between them, that their castles, lands, and retinues were pretty equally balanced in strength, size, and number; and that they went at it hammer and tongs (only I don't fancy there were any tongs then) all the year round. The two castles were about thirty miles from each other"——

"Twenty-five, Eddie, dear," from my wife.

"No, Ada, thirty."

"I'm sure it's twenty-five, Edward, you've always said so before, and I remember it distinctly."

"Well, we'll call it thirty for once," I rejoined, feeling that it was just as well there was not a kitchen poker at hand, but affecting to smile pleasantly.

"As I was just going to say, there were thirty castles—I mean twenty-five miles—I beg your pardon, I lost the thread rather for a moment, I remember now. I was just going to say that Baron Lechtrichtliten had a very gallant son who was a renowned warrior and foremost in every fight. As his father was now a little corpulent and often obliged to have his armour let out (I don't mean on hire but literally), this son, whose name was Splitzoder, became more and more the real leader of his father's retainers. He was a splendidly built young fellow six feet two."

"Don't you mean three, Edward?"

"No, I mean two. Six feet two."

"Oh! very well, but you certainly said three the other day when you told the story at the Lynams' dinner-party."

"Well, I say two now. His armour was polished till it flashed in the sunlight, and he was always noted for the white plume that he wore in his"——

"Red plume—not white, Edward."

"I say the white plume that he wore in"——

"Red, dear—I'm *certain* it was red—don't you remember?"

"No, I don't remember. I remember it was white."

"But I *know* it was red."

"Then if you know it was red, perhaps you'll finish the story yourself, for I'm hanged if I will. The way you interrupt one is perfectly sickening."

Of course this was very awkward. Everybody who had a watch-chain or a parasol toyed with it, and pretended to look abstractedly at nothing. I saw Bindle was greatly distressed, and, indeed, I don't know how we should have got out of the difficulty if my wife—I will say that for her—had not helped us. She burst out crying, and asked to be taken back immediately to her mother, who was at that moment situated on an average computation at a distance of about two hundred miles from the launch. This created a much needed diversion, for all the ladies crowded round her, and glared at me, and made half audible remarks on the subject of men considered with particular reference to their invariable brutality to women. I noticed further that Mrs. Taplow, the six weeks' bride, seemed to become an object of sympathy to Mrs. Boulter, Mrs. Reekie, and Mrs. Murray, as if they dreaded for her the time when she would discover what man really was in domestic life. Also that Mrs. Taplow looked pleadingly at Mr. Taplow as if to say, "*You* will never never be like that to *me*, will you?" After a bit I retired to the extreme stern of the vessel, and was smoking gloomily, when Mrs. Boulter suddenly appeared, and with a radiant face assured me that my wife was anxious to forgive me, and would I please come back and finish the story.

"My dear Mrs. Boulter," I replied, "as for my wife forgiving me, I am really not conscious of having committed any crime that calls for my morally wallowing in the dust before her. And as for the story, I would finish it with the greatest pleasure, but I really don't remember how it went on." As a matter of fact, I did perfectly well, but my spirit rebelled against being led back like a penitent convict to do the rest of his sentence.

Mrs. Boulter retired abashed, and I looked over the stern, and was thinking that Edwards' song had a great deal in it after all if you came to reflect, when I felt a touch on my arm, and turning round I saw my wife with an expression of countenance which has been too much for me any time these—never mind how many years. Whereupon I made a fool of myself in full view of Bindle's housekeeper, and just as the engineman looked out that way from the boiler, or the valve, or whatever else it is that engine men on launches generally seem to get inside without minding particularly.

Did I finish the story? Perhaps I did. Did my wife interrupt any more? Perhaps she didn't. Was Gretchen in love with Splitzoder, and was that why she would not have anything to say to other lovers? Of course. How did she come to see him if the two barons were deadly enemies? Out of her casement, as he led his father's troops against her father's ditto. How could she see his face when he had his vizor on? Because he put it up, being rather warm and very fearless. Did Splitzoder return her love? Rather. When did he see her? When he captured her father's castle in a night surprise. Did the two barons make it up, the young people marry, and all

end happily? Naturally. Everything always ends happily, however uncomfortably it begins and is continued.

This episode had carried us almost to Maidenhead, where we took train back again. We had all come down together, but on the return journey Tubbin and the second Miss Watson, and Nuttle and the third Miss Watson could not somehow be persuaded that there was plenty of room in our carriage, and got by mistake into two separate empty compartments. The eldest Miss Watson (who was a bit sere and yellow, having been left some fields behind in the chase, poor girl) was rather waspish about it on the journey, and when we got to Paddington she said something to her younger sisters. I don't know what it was, but I heard one of them answer, "You know very well you'd have done it yourself if you'd had the chance." From which I rather inferred that she had caught a sisterly one in the eye.

And so we went home and that's all.

No, it isn't all, because Tubbin married the second Miss Watson and Nuttle married the youngest Miss Watson not long afterwards, and I consider that picnic responsible.

THE PIT.

THIS title has no reference to coal mines, still less to the figurative emblem which a certain type of chapel preacher much affects. It signifies that particular portion of the theatre in which the free-born Briton usually sits when his finances are in a depressed state, and love of the drama is strong upon him.

It is my mature opinion that the middle of the first row of the pit—when you get there—is Elysium. To begin with, it is perfect from a dramatic point of view. You are on a level with the players instead of looking down at the tops of their heads. You are at a respectful distance from them, insomuch that all the ladies look lovely, and the appliances of art as distinguished from the naturally beautiful, do not obtrude themselves upon you. You are not too far off for purposes of hearing. You face the middle of the stage, and are spared those horrid glimpses of the side wings which reveal the prompter in a frock coat and tall hat; or the virtuous hero talking in a familiar and friendly way to the double-dyed villain; or the ladies of the ballet waiting to come on; or the scene-shifter getting a cataract ready; or some other equally sickening disillusion. You are not too hot generally, because heat ascends. You are not too cold, because you have a fat lady glued to you on

one side and a thick-set man wedged into you on the other. You are separated from the back row of the ten shilling stalls only by a barrier that a child could climb over. With such advantages as these to boast of, you may well overlook a hard seat, a desire to unscrew your legs and lay them on the floor, by reason of the scanty accommodation for them in front of you; two knees jutting out from the owner of the seat immediately behind into the small of your back; a liability to be not so much passed by as walked over at intervals by a female with a clothes-basket containing oranges, and a total inability to get out upon any consideration whatsoever till the performance is over.

But before you can enjoy this piled up accumulation of bliss, you must, as I before hinted—get there.

Now there is only one way to get there. You must arrive at the theatre one hour before the door opens. You must place your nose against that same door, and not move hand or foot until the bolt is drawn. If in an incautious moment you turn side-ways to the door, or try to hold up a newspaper and read it by the flickering light of a gas-jet somewhere round the corner, you will lose your vantage ground to some experienced "pit squasher" as sure as eggs are eggs. For the first quarter of an hour you will find it irksome to maintain this position, but as time goes on you will, at all events, have no difficulty in keeping close to the door, because a couple of hundred or so of people will be pounding you to a jelly against it with all their might. I should have weakly supposed myself that it could not make the smallest difference in the end to the British public whether they did this or waited quietly, but as they have

always done it since the flood, there must be a reason beyond my shallow capacity to divine.

As the hour draws near, you will undergo a succession of false alarms. Whenever a sound is heard on the other side of the mystic door, the throng of which you are the flattened head and front will be agitated to its very outskirts, and hitherto unrevealed complications of elbows will penetrate your frame. You are tolerably sure, moreover, to be in the immediate vicinity of a young lady who is being treated to a theatre by her own special gentleman, and she will most likely observe, "well, she's sure," and then become faint at one of these junctures, and the gentleman will attribute both circumstances to fiendish violence on your part (though you have never willingly pushed so much as a worm in your life and are being impelled against her by forces hopelessly beyond your control) and ask what you are shoving for, as if you were the only other person present and had acres of space at your command, and he will express a wish for you to come outside in order that he may punch your head. As you can no more come outside than you can swallow a haystack, this may be regarded as pleasantry.

When, after a period which seems to you to be incalculably long, the door opens, you are precipitated like a shot out of a catapult into the space beyond, and engage in a mad race to the ticket-box. And when you have there secured a pass, you start upon a steeplechase over the pit-benches, which, if you are fortunate, lands you in the coveted place of which I have faintly described the joys. And then comes another half hour of waiting before the curtain rises, during which you cannot read, because you

have not got anything to read, or because the gas is turned low for economical reasons, and are fain to place your nose upon the railing in front and think.

Your next-door neighbour is naturally a subject of considerable interest to you in the pit. I remember once in my youth seeing a piece in which there was a good deal of powder burnt, and every time a gun went off, a stout lady next to me put both her arms round my neck and observed hysterically, "To think now!" This occurred so regularly, that at last I began to duck my head when I saw that a volley was coming. Sometimes your neighbour abstractedly produces a bottle at intervals and partakes of spirituous refreshment by applying his lips to the neck of the bottle, after which, if socially inclined, he will offer to pass it to you and be rather hurt by your refusal to succeed him at the still glistening neck; or he will indulge in an orange and be indifferent as to the destination of the peel; or he will embarrass you by a very open display of his affection for the young lady whom he has brought with him.

If you have improvidently taken a tall hat to the pit, it will cause you some anguish of mind during the evening. If you keep it on your head you will be execrated by every one sitting behind. If you put it under the seat you will speedily discover that the floor of the pit is not in a state in which you could enjoy eating your dinner off it, and, moreover, that the person sitting immediately behind you regards your hat as a hassock or a football, according to his or her fancy—in which latter case your superior twenty-one shilling ventilated silk gossamer will shoot out spasmodically between your legs at intervals. If you keep it

on your lap you will find it an extremely uncomfortable possession to guard.

Many and many a pleasant hour have I spent in the pit. Why, bless you, sir, when Miss Helen Faucit used to—well, never mind, but it was a good long time ago, when I had my first struggle for the front row. Do I go there now? Maybe not. I am still in the very prime of life you must understand distinctly, but perhaps I am not quite so fond as I used to be of standing an hour against the door, and being pushed and elbowed about, and having my coat split up the back, and my watch stolen, and my feet trodden upon. So I go in the stalls now—when I get an order.

BEING SHOWN OVER.

I HAVE found in life that when a man has a particular habit or fancy himself, he is prone to imagine that all his friends share it. An individual with a propensity to stimulants will find it hard to believe that you do not pine for brandy at 11 a.m. A vigorous walker will fail to sympathise with your desire to sit upon a milestone after you have passed fifteen of its fellows. A lover of angling will consider you a most unaccountable being if, when you have been sitting in a punt for eight hours on a wet day, with a net result of two tiddle-bats and lumbago, you express a mild wish to land. But perhaps this tendency is developed more acutely in the matter of a man's house than in any other way.

Let me relieve my feelings by giving an illustration.

I went some time ago to see Brown, who had bought an old house in the country, and done it up after his own heart. He met me at the station, and talked about his mansion incessantly until we arrived at the same. When we did arrive, I had not got my hat off before he said, "What do you think of the hall?" I said I thought it a beautiful hall. He then told me the full, true, and particular history of the hall and all that therein was, while I stood in a draught. When he had finished the narrative he asked me

if I would not like to see the house. I assumed a sickly smile, appropriate to the melancholy occasion, and said I should like it immensely.

The house had forty rooms (upon my honour), and he showed me every one (also upon my honour). But bless you, the rooms as they were would not satisfy him. He explained, down to the minutest detail, the rooms as they had been. How he had run a passage through here, and closed up another one there, and joined two rooms together there, and thrown out a window there, and done something to another window there, and put in a fireplace there, and raised a ceiling there, &c., &c., &c. I said at intervals, "Oh, indeed," "How ingenious," "How very charming;" and then did it backwards, "How very charming," "How ingenious," "Oh, indeed," and whenever I got behind his back I brought off a big yawn. I was rather ashamed of it, but I believe in reality I might have gone to sleep if I could only have kept moving all the same, like the unfortunate pedestrians in the six days' competitions, because Brown was far too delighted to notice the condition of the victim chained to his triumphal car.

Perhaps you think that when we had done the round of the house it was all over. Not a bit of it. "Wouldn't you like to see the stables?" Not even the hollow form of waiting for an answer—off he went. Stables, coach-house, pig-stye, fowl-houses, all inspected minutely, with copious explanatory remarks on the buildings, and biographical notices of the live stock. As we wended our way back at length, Brown suddenly recollected that he had not mentioned the peacocks, and then he proceeded to say that the peacocks all roosted on a particular branch of a particular

tree, and that it was just their time to roost; and if we waited for a few minutes quite quietly (on damp grass—cold evening) we should see them roost. So we waited quite quietly for about a quarter of an hour and we saw them roost. I may mention that I did not personally care twopence whether the peacocks roosted on a tree, or a steeple, or a pillar post, or nowhere; but they were Brown's peacocks, and *he* cared. Full history of each peacock thrown in after roosting accomplished.

And now—now I thought to myself—virtue will be rewarded at last, and we shall have dinner. Brown seemed to take that view also, for he made towards the door. Suddenly he pulled up, and I felt myself turning pale.

"Let's see," said Brown, thoughtfully, "I did show you the hall, didn't I?"

"Oh, yes, my dear fellow. Splendid hall, finest hall I ever saw," I answered hastily, in a tone of alarm, which I vainly endeavoured to conceal. At the same time I took his arm and moved on a step towards the promised land. But he stopped again.

"But did I tell you how I came to get that beautiful tesselated"——

"Oh, yes, indeed. Magnificent, never saw anything like it in all my life—so chaste too." I moved him on another step, but only to pull up again. I began to sympathise with the old woman who couldn't get her pig over a stile.

"I don't think I showed you that dormer window on the west side of the house. Would you believe it, that when I bought the house that window was all blocked up with plaster. Well, what did I do? I said to my architect"——

I made another despairing jump down his throat.

"Yes, you showed the window to me, and told me what you had done. Most ingenious. Exquisite dormer window —one of the dormerest I ever saw." Two yards gained, and hope reviving in my bosom.

Again his stride faltered—then stopped. "Why, my dear fellow, how stupid of me I never"——

"Oh! yes you did, thanks, I liked it immensely. One of the prettiest things in the house."

That quenched him. We reached the door and entered the hall again without further stoppages. I smelt savoury odours which proclaimed the waiting joint.

Brown took his hat off. I followed suit with alacrity.

"We've got just nice time to get ready for dinner. I'll show you your room. How stupid of me, though. Never mind, we shall manage it if we make haste."

Brown turned—put his hat on hastily, handed mine to me, and, to my sickening disgust, I found myself bustling out of the house again at his tails.

He laughed heartily. I gave forth a sound of hollow mirth and asked where he was going.

"Why, my dear fellow, it's most absurd! The very time too, just in the dusk of the evening when they come up to the top so prettily."

"When what comes up to what top?" I am afraid my tone was not altogether free from asperity.

"Why, the trout! I have got a little pond with a stream running in at one end of it and out at the other, and I put some trout in and they're getting on capitally. Fancy my nearly forgetting to show it to you before dinner. It is across this field, and I'm afraid the grass is very wet, but you won't mind that, I know"

What I said was—"Oh! no: not a bit." What I thought was—"*How* do you know? I hate wet feet, and I don't want to see your pond, and I do want dinner, and though you are a very good sort of a fellow, you have exasperated me to such a degree that I feel as if, in consideration of two shillings, I could throw you into the pond to keep company with your wretched little trout, and then send the dormer window after you, and shoot the peacocks, and burn the house, and go home."

But I did none of these things; and after dinner, my usually benignant frame of mind came back again, and as I smoked the peaceful calumet and drank a jorum of old Scotch with a slice of lemon floating at the top and a lump of sugar melting at the bottom, I felt that I should be quite at peace with all men, if only Brown would not keep telling me how he came by the chair I sat on and the table I sat by, and otherwise converting himself into a living inventory.

Well, well, we all have our little weaknesses, and I will say for Brown, that he was never known to beat his wife. That is my own principal shortcoming.

AN OLD BLOKE AT CRICKET.

In the year one thousand eight hundred and never mind what, I, at the early age of fourteen, was captain of the second eleven of my school. That I was a most excellent cricketer and an admirable captain was a matter about which no doubt could be entertained for a moment. At least, I can truly declare that *I* never felt the smallest dubitation myself, and if I didn't, I don't see why anybody else should, unless it were some soured and disappointed impostor in flannels whom I did not put on to bowl when he wished it, or who thought that he had a divine right to stand at point, because in putting up his hands to save his own nose he once caught a man by accident from a hard hit.

In those days I bowled to some considerable tune. Yes, sir! I once took four wickets in four consecutive balls. What do you think of that for bowling? And when the first eleven with broom-sticks played the second eleven with bats, I led off by bowling my own elder brother middle stump, first ball. There was a look in his eyes as he retired which made me feel a little doubtful about my reception when we met afterwards on the domestic hearth; but he kindly relieved me of all my uncertainty, and some of my skin, with his left boot.

I was not behind with the bat either. Forward play—

straight bat—good style—not much hitting, but distinctly pretty. As for fielding, I was as quick as a cat and never tired.

Circumstances connected with my health, and having no reference to book stealing or smoking pickwicks, or any like enormities, led to my being removed from school at an early age. Later circumstances resulted in the placing of my nose, at a still early age, in close and incessant contact with a grindstone, which has gone on increasing ever since, and is now calculated to make a mill-wheel look silly. Hence it was willed by fate that there should be only one W. G. Grace instead of two, and my active association with cricket became limited to a more and more fitful handling of the bat, and finally died out altogether.

But I was tempted a very short time since to play in a match. Two sons of mine (who were very much obliged to me not so long ago for trundling a sixpenny ball to them in a back garden and pretending they were not out when they were) had been making rather light of my narratives of ancient days, and intimating, without much reserve, that they regarded me in the aspect of an Old Bloke. This roused the British lion, and I set to work and got together ten other Old Blokes, who had not played a match at cricket for five years at least, and we played eleven Conceited Young Apes.

We won the toss, but we put them in first, because their captain nearly cried when he said "heads" and the penny came down "tails." I was too modest to captain my side, so we elected a young fellow who had only left school about thirty years. "Will you bowl?" said he to me (remembering my story about four wickets in four balls

which I had told him three times in the tent): "With pleasure," said I. I took the ball, the field was placed, two little boys came in all pads and impudence, and I started the over.

First ball—"Wide," sung out the umpire, though I declare it was nothing of the kind.

Second ball—"No ball," remarked the umpire. The umpire was evidently an ignorant ass, and I seriously thought of walking off the field like I remembered the All-England Eleven did once when Lillywhite no-balled Willsher. But I controlled myself and again let go.

The third ball was a perfect beauty. The boy could not possibly play it, he evidently felt that instinctively; so he hit it to square leg for four. When I state that I distinctly saw his eyes shut as he lashed out, the true value of this senseless smite may be imagined.

Fourth ball—"Wide." I admit that that one was a wide. My foot slipped, and the ball somehow went towards cover-point. The boy who was in at my end sniggered at this purely accidental occurrence. Little brute! The judgment is impartial, because it was my eldest son and the heir to my landed estates.

Up to this point I had been bowling round hand, exactly in the same style that I used to bowl in at school; but as I began here to feel a little muscular straining in the arm, side and shoulder, I thought I would finish the over with some "daisy cutters" which I had sometimes tried with effect as a change.

Fifth ball, and first "daisy cutter"—Did not cut daisies, but took an upward direction, and was finally caught by the long-stop.

Sixth ball—Cut one daisy, just at my feet, and then pro-

gressed in a series of alarming and convulsive hops. When it reached the batsman he sent it to long-off for three.

Seventh ball—Similar in kind, only it went to long-on for two.

Eighth, and last ball—This was a masterpiece; bowled with the head. All my previous efforts having been extremely swift, the batsman naturally thought this would follow suit. Not so. I came up to the wicket with a fierce run and then bowled the ball as slowly as possible. I suppose, as I had bowled it with my head, the silly boy thought he had better return it at my head. Anyhow it whizzed past my ear like a shot out of a cannon.

Of course I could have gone on bowling; but I wanted the others to have their turn of the enjoyment, so I went off after that over and fielded at point.

Do you know, it was quite dangerous. The young monkeys kept cutting the ball in my direction till I felt as if I were in the Redan. Now on one side; now on the other. Now close to my nose; now straight at my shins; now right in my ribs. Of course I tried to get my hands to it like I used to do; but, bless me, the ball did not come in somehow in a respectable sort of way like it did in the old days. It was ever so much harder now, and came at a greater pace, and the ground was farther off to reach, and the sun was hotter, and my hands did not get to where they should have been, but everywhere else instead (except once, and then I got it on the top of my left thumb and nearly sprained it), and—and—well, you know the sort of thing I mean.

We got the boys out at last, and went in; and what's more, I went in first; and what's more, I hit a *four;* and

what's more, the very next ball as ever was I hit a THREE. And when I had run out that four and that three, I felt as if I had got to one wicket and left my inside at the other wicket, and I leant on the bat and I panted and puffed and blowed and saw stars and fireworks and all manner of pretty sights; but never a trace of anything like a ball or a bowler anywhere about. And then I recovered myself and hit a mighty hit at the ball; but the hit didn't come off, and the bails did.

And the result of it all was—

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and when we got home in the evening, my sons indulged in irreverent chaff at my expense. I bore it grimly, and then spoke to them as only a father could.

"Dear lads, I am so truly pleased that you have enjoyed yourselves to-day and beaten us old blokes. And I take it so kindly, that when you see I can hardly sit on a chair for stiffness, and that my back and shoulders feel as if some one had been throwing the dining-room furniture at me, you should try and cheer me up by making these pretty little cutting and driving remarks at my expense. And I feel that I cannot reward you better than by giving you an opportunity of exercising the noble quality of self-denial when you go back to school next term. And so, sweet boys, I have decided to reduce your weekly pocket-money by one-half until further notice and to send you no hampers this term. Good-night, my precious ones, you have had a long day and must need rest badly."

It is a most curious circumstance that that cricket match has never been alluded to in my family since.

BILLS.

ONCE upon a time when pigs drank wine, and monkeys cultivated the obnoxious habit of chewing tobacco—in other words, when I was a schoolboy—I was innocent of all the delights which were to be derived by me in after-life from bills. Beyond an undefined impression that when I had a new "rig-out" my father had to pay for it, and a dim consciousness that what I ate and drank was not supplied gratuitously by tradespeople, as a tribute to my personal merits, I took it all for granted. I know a good deal about bills now, and they have afforded me in various ways many a pleasant hour.

First, it is a most amusing pastime to make calculations and guesses as to the probable amount of Barker's bill this quarter. The way to play at this game is as follows:—

DIRECTIONS FOR THE GAME.

You take your wife (you must have a wife to do it properly) into your study (you must have a study to do it properly), and shut the door behind you. Next you pull a piece of paper out and produce pen and ink, and pull a face thirty-six inches long—it must not be shorter or you spoil the game. Then you poise the pen in readiness for action, and say to your wife in the sort of tone that would be

appropriate if you were taking the measurement of a coffin, "How much do you think Barker's bill will be this time, dear?" If your wife has been drilled to a proper degree of slavish submission, insomuch that she trembles at your nod (she ought to have been before you can play the game properly), she will assume a ghastly smile of sickly encouragement, moderated by secret terror and reply, "I —d—d—don't really think it will be so *very* much this time, dear—you see we were obliged to get so many extra things last quarter."

This will be the signal for your pulling out Barker's bill for last quarter. It ought strictly to be a bill of a long "strippy" species, which you have to shift up and down in front of your nose in order to read it, but this is not indispensable. You then begin a cross-examination of gradually increasing asperity on Barker's coming bill and Barker's last bill in their relations to each other. Will this be in it again? Why was that in it last time? Couldn't that article have been repaired instead of getting a new one? Wouldn't it have been better to get so-and-so at the stores? [N.B.—Stores mean ready-money—you never dreamt of producing ready-money, or suggesting stores at the time. You know it and your wife knows it. This is part of the fun.] Is not Robinson's shop cheaper than Barker's, and the goods much better? How came it that a new carpet was wanted for the dining-room when the old one had only been in daily use twenty-five years? Your grandfather had a carpet (in a room hardly ever used—but you mustn't mention this), which lasted all his married life, and you really can't understand it. Why is Billy everlastingly wearing out his trousers? You never wore out your trousers at his age—(you did—but

it is only a game, so you may tell a little tarradiddler in passing). It seems to you that everybody in the house thinks you are made of money, and that you are expected to go on slaving and slaving to gratify their extravagance. You won't do it—that's all you've got to say. (It isn't all you've got to say—that's part of the fun again.) Well, for the sixth time, how much is Barker's bill going to be this time, that's what you want to know? There's the carpet —how much will that be? About £12? Then all you can say is that you call it monstrous. However, if it is so, it is so. (Here you put the £12 down on paper.) Then these ridiculous new curtains that you never could for your part understand any sane person wanting. (You were mainly responsible for the purchase.) And so on.

By this process you get down a number of figures, and then you add them up. And the real screaming joke of it all is that whatever you put down, and however you add it up, the bill when it does come is always twice as much as you reckoned.

The attitude of your wife throughout this interview must be one of abject grovelling apology. She must accept humbly the whole responsibility for everything in Barker's bill, from house-flannel to your own bath towels. Whether she ordered them or you ordered them—whether they were absolutely indispensable for existence, or totally needless luxuries—she must accept the position of being the living guilty embodiment of Barker's bills, past and future, or the game will be spoilt. It often is spoilt by a failure to observe this direction implicitly. I remember one case in which a wife so far forgot herself as to say she had nothing to do

with the bill for a dress suit and overcoat, which her husband had ordered for himself.

I forgot one thing—you ought to make your wife cry before you have finished. About half-way through is the proper time for her to break down. It is not actually necessary for her to sob outright, but she ought from that point to keep up a more or less continual sniffle. It adds great zest to the game.

. . . . . .

Then again, it is surprising what a lot of amusement may be got out of arranging and labelling bills. You can get little india-rubber bands, and you can put the bills in them, and you can number the bills and make lists of them, and keep all the bills of one sort distinct from all the bills of another sort, so that when Jones sends in a bill with "To account rendered, £7, 8s. 9d. Immediate payment will oblige," all you have to do is to turn to the right packet, and find the account rendered of £7, 8s. 9d., and then you put the two bills together—and there you are, as right and tight as possible.

Often when you come home in the evening you will find a blue envelope, directed in a clerkly hand. You immediately opine that it comes from the dreaded Snooks. You circle round it, and toy with it, and decide to have dinner first. So you have dinner first—but the blue envelope keeps obtruding itself upon you, and after dinner you determine to know the worst, and tear it open. Another moment and your wife (you must have a wife for this purpose also—the cook will not do on any account) is folded in your arms, and large tears of relief are streaming from your eyes in torrents. It is an advertisement, and

does not come from Snooks at all! It is not a reprieve truly—but a respite is better than a poke in the eye with a burnt stick.

But even yet I have not finished. What a pleasant and profitable employment it is to compare some sorts of bills with your own previous ideas of what they represent. A man comes in to whitewash one or two ceilings. He whitewashes the ceilings at his own convenience (never at yours), and you forget all about it. Then one day you receive a bill, which tells you, for the first time, that in reality he rendered you services which you never even suspected, and which should have filled your heart with gratitude. You learn that he devoted to those ceilings an immensity of time (charged by the hour): that he lavished on them every process which original genius and trained experience could suggest to his thoughtful mind as capable of being converted into an item of charge in a bill: that the word "whitewash" no more adequately represents what he did to those ceilings than the word "daub" would do justice to the masterpiece of a Royal Academician. You survey the ceilings with new and chastened emotions. You look for beauties previously hidden from your ignorant and blinded eyes. You search humbly for traces of sising, compoing, picking-out, and all the other processes represented in that yard and a half of bill. Ultimately you pay the bill.

THE SULTAN OF BOTOO.

I NEVER did it before and it is highly probable that I shall never do it again, except perhaps accidentally in the street. But I did it that time. I met—I might almost go so far as to say that I eat—what do you think? Royalty! Royalty pure and unadulterated, alive and kicking, be-diamonded, and be-sapphired, and be-rubied. Now I scorn to deceive you for one minute. It was not Her Gracious Majesty. Nor was it anything else in the way of white European royalty. To keep you in suspense no longer and mention a name that will be as familiar as a household word to all, it was none other than His Highness Smashi-Quashi-Bucktoopoltram-skubidotam-Zomtam, Sultan of Botoo. He had been sojourning in this country for a while, and at a great banquet given in his honour I was present. I think I heard a sceptical reader murmur gently then that I must have got in with an order. Not so. No one was allowed there with an order unless he would consent to proclaim the fact by wearing a garter or a thistle, and I was much too proud to do *that*—thank you. I should certainly have paid for my ticket in hard money—the hardest I could get (in fact I did pay for having my hat taken away and put under a Gladstone bag for safety)—if a friend of mine,

Snivers, who was engaged to my sister, and could not make too much of me in consequence, had not insisted on taking tickets for both. He had travelled abroad and seen the Sultan in his own dominions—in a pink bath, I think he said—and he was anxious to see him again, and so we went. And now you know all about that.

The Sultan was a yellowy, browny, jolly old fellow. He had many good friends here, and they had shown him all that was to be seen. I picked up in the course of the evening a few of the particulars of his stay which I think will interest you. I give you a faithful account of it in his Majesty's own words, translated to me by his interpreter.

"Yes, I came across the ocean,
'Cos I had a sort of notion,
That you English people were a funny lot;
And, moreover, though my native
Land is extra super-lative,
Yet I must admit at times it's rather hot.

So our royal self and suite
Got on board a steamer fleet
(Meaning not a lot of steamers but one flyer),
And though feeling very queer
In our royal inside—here
Did our best the foaming billow to admire.

And since first we touched this shore
We've been fêted more and more,
And we never seem to have an hour's repose;
I am hurried here and there,
And the people gape and stare
Till I fancy I've a white smut on my nose.

I have waited on the Queen,
And the House of Commons seen,
And oh! rare treat—heard an Irish member speak;

Public buildings I've inspected,
And once when a bit dejected
I was asked to go and hear a play in Greek.

Notwithstanding my religion,
I have eaten pie of pigeon,
And, ah! woe is me to say it—drunk champagne,
Both of which I am forbid
And didn't ought to did,
And will never never never do again.

At a ballet I looked in,
Which, perhaps, it was a sin,
But if so, I made amends for it soon arter,
When I went through the agony
Of a conversazione,
Which promoted me unto the rank of martyr.

I have swallowed yellow fog,
Led about a muzzled dog,
Put a penny in the slot and tried my weight,
Seen the Epsom Derby run
(When by accident some one
Took away my watch, chain, rings, and seal of state).

I must soon go home again,
For my eight wives pine in vain,
For eight sights of their one solitary lord,
And I'll tell them all about it,
At least—No! I rather doubt it,
For I fear that with some parts they might be bored."

Now I always go on the principle of taking it well out of a ticket. I have a positive sense of loss and injury when anything included in a ticket goes past me. I felt that on this occasion my money—I mean Snivers' money, but as he was all but in the family it's the same thing—included a good British stare at the Sultan of Botoo and his jewels and his suite and all that he had about him. So I dressed in excellent time, and when Snivers showed

an alarming tendency to linger in the back drawing-room with my sister and whisper soft nothings in that horrible sort of distinct whisper that you can hear much better than a shout, I went for him savagely and hauled him up to his room to dress, and when he got there, I hurried and bustled him to such an extent that I really don't think he knew whether he had his dress suit or his boating flannels on when he started. But we got there in time—that's the point—we got there in time. We beat the band by five minutes, and when we got to one end of a long room and had our names called out, very loud and all wrong, as if we were railway stations, and walked along to the other end to be presented to the chairman of the evening, there were only four or five people there. So we made a very good start and got a capital position for seeing every one else who came.

And when they began to pass in it really was a very instructive sight. It may be a noble thing to storm a redoubt, or swim across a river under fire, or lead a forlorn hope, or bring an alderman in safety down a fire escape in his night-gown—but let me tell you if you don't know it, that to have your name murdered at one end of a long room, and afterwards carry the dead body the whole way up the apartment, with eyes glaring upon you right and left; to behold the goal apparently a hundred yards off, and not seeming to get any nearer; to feel your legs taking action independently of you and of each other, your arms lengthening visibly, your nose reddening, your cheeks paling; to arrive at last, and signify by a ghastly snigger that you are pleased to salute the personage who waits to receive you, and whom you have wished in the bowels of the earth all

the time you have been approaching him,—this is indeed a feat beside which deeds of warfare sink into comparative skittles and bowls. To look on is, however, pleasant.

The Sultan arrived last with his suite, and at his approach the band struck up his national anthem, and there was much applause. I don't remember the whole of the national anthem screech for screech, but I have a very pleasing general recollection as of crockery being broken, pigs being killed, cows dying, and cats performing a concerted piece.

I got very excited as His Majesty came up the room, and as I could not personally claim acquaintance, I pushed Snivers forward and urged him to try and get a word in, on the strength of the pink bath, and then introduce me. But Snivers backed and refused rather rudely, and muttered something about "snobbish." I had ruffled him a little before starting, and he had not cooled down yet, besides which he was in a disgustingly selfish and abstracted condition of mind, and kept thinking of my sister. So we went in to dinner undistinguished by any mark of royal attention except a smile from a member of the suite who was dressed all in yellow, and had an inverted soup-plate on his head. I felt very pleased at this greeting, and asked Snivers eagerly if it were the prime minister, but he told me that it was the Sultan's private cook, who always went about with him on religious grounds, and then I felt less conceited.

There were a good many ladies present, and I had one on my right hand—Mrs. Noodler. She had passed the meridian of life, and was considerably deaf without being in the least aware of it, and she developed into a very pronounced cross during the proceedings, and made me wish that she had dated back a little earlier and kept company

with Lot's wife. Her strong point was to ask me embarrassing questions and expect me to answer them, so that she could hear comfortably and no one else.

This is a sample of the sort of thing :—

"Pray, sir, can you tell me who
That lady is in blue.
Sitting there
Next an officer in red
Who, I think I heard it said,
Was Captain Blair."

"No, I'm sorry for to say
That I do not know the la-
dy, but I am
Inclined to think the waiter,
When he comes round soon or later,
Can find out, ma'am."

"Oh! you think it's Mrs. Slater"
(How I did begin to hate her).
"Not so, madam.
My remark, in fact, was merely
That I do not know her really
From Eve or Adam."

"Not Slater? No but Heave."
"I ask you to believe
I know it not."
"Oh what a funny name
To go by, it's quite a shame!
Poor Mrs. Pott."

As far as I remember it was a beautiful dinner. Whether it was or not, I believe I did justice to it, and I swear that Mrs. Noodler did. How that woman did eat and drink, to be sure. Snivers, who was on my left, fell very short of his duty, and dined principally off lover's sighs, which he could just as well have stood himself at home for nothing. He might in fact as sensibly have taken a packet of sandwiches and eaten them in preference to the feast. It was not fair on the tickets, because I could not manage quite enough for two, and it vexed me sorely.

The great oriental feature introduced into an otherwise European meal was curry, hot and strong, flavoured and served up in all manner of ways, and with accompanying relishes that made your eyes water to look at them, and then made your eyes water again when you put them into your mouth. I really thought Mrs. Noodler would have caught fire once. Volumes of smoke did begin to issue from her mouth. She did not put it out with water though I offered it. She said she thought champagne would do her more good.

"The champagne's very good," said she. "Try it."

"Thanks, I prefer claret. Champagne does not agree with me. It affects my liver."

"Does what?"

"Affects my liver."

You will agree with me that it was not pleasant to call out about my liver as if I were putting it up to auction.

"*Fixes your what?*"

"FIXES NOTHING. IT AFFECTS MY LIVER."

"Oh! indeed. But pray, sir, don't trouble to speak quite so loud. I can hear quite plainly if you whisper distinctly."

In imagination I brained her on the spot. As I could not do that in actual fact, I muttered "old cat" at intervals savagely, till my anger cooled.

There was a long toast list after dinner, and so the chairman, who had formerly been a leading merchant out in Botoo, and was a sharp-featured, and evidently very business-like person, with a decided sense of humour, got to work almost before the crumbs had been swept off the table.

"Your Highness, my lords, ladies, and gentlemen,—The first toast I have the honour to bring before you this evening is that of her most gracious Majesty the Queen. It needs no words from me to insure it a cordial reception on this occasion. The Queen."

"What did he say?" asked Mrs. Noodler, as I was rising to drink the toast.

"The Queen."

"Oh! The Queen. I wish he wouldn't speak so low."

Then rising after every one else had finished she observed in trumpet tones "The Queen," and consumed three-quarters of a glass of champagne on the strength of her loyal emotions.

The national anthem was rendered by two professional ladies and two professional gentlemen, who were suddenly exposed to view by the drawing back of a curtain up in a corner, and then the chairman went at it again.

"Your Highness, my lords, ladies, and gentlemen,—I now beg to propose the toast of the Army, Navy, and reserved forces.

"Our Army always distinguishes itself greatly and would, I have no doubt, distinguish itself more if the Government rifles occasionly fired off in the direction aimed at, and the

swords and bayonets did not always curl up when progged into the enemy. Our Navy is also everything we could desire, as long as we don't attempt to use any of the big guns, and are very gentle with the smaller ones.

"As for the Reserved Forces, we all know how gallantly they would come forward to defend our country in case of need, and how they do annually leave their homes and kith and kindred to join the standard and perform prodigies of valour on Easter Monday. I beg to couple with the Army, the name of General Pipeclay; with the Navy, Rear-Admiral Portholes; and with the Reserved Forces, Lieutenant Smutberry."

The toast was duly polished off and the curtain pulled back again for the professional ladies and gentlemen, who had been eating chicken and ham in a back room, to render something in the rub-a-dub patriotic line which excited much enthusiasm, and made us all feel the truth of those beautiful and modest lines of a great national poet, that—

> "Two skinny Frenchmen, four Portuguese,
> One jolly Englishman can lick all these."

Even Mrs. Noodler looked warlike and desirous of standing in the breach, a position for which her physical dimensions most eminently qualified her. As for Snivers, the expression on his countenance plainly showed that he was longing to defend my sister at the risk of his own life.

After a brief interval of expectancy, General Pipeclay was seen to rise for the purpose of responding for the Army. He was a portly warrior with a red face and a loud voice, and having been long accustomed to shout the word of command so as to reach three or four miles in the open air,

he naturally fell into the same style of speaking on the present occasion. Most of us found it a little trying, but Mrs. Noodler fairly revelled.

"That's what I call really speaking up," she said afterwards, "without being a bit too loud. So different to most people I hear talk."

To the best of my recollection General Pipeclay spoke in salvoes as follows:—

"Your Highness—my lords—ladies—and gentlemen,—On—behalf—of—the—ARMY—I—beg—to—THANK YOU—for—the—cordial—manner—in—which—you—have received—this—TOAST—Her Majesty's ARMY—will—I—hope—always—do—its—DUTY—whenever—and—wherever—it—may—be—CALLED UPON—and—the—approbation—of—our—COUNTRYMEN—will—always—be—our—best—and—highest—REWARD—Again I—THANK—YOU."

Down went the General and up got Admiral Portholes—a tall thin man with a hook nose, and nothing particularly nautical about him except his uniform. He didn't even hitch *them* up at intervals. He did not follow the commendable example of the General in the matter of brevity, and displayed a horrid tendency to length of wind and bewildering statistics which caused much yawning and clinking of plates and other signs of impatience.

"Your Highness, my lords, ladies, and gentlemen,—I rise with pride and pleasure to respond to this toast on behalf of her Majesty's Navy, though I could have wished that the task had fallen to some one better able to discharge it" (so did we afterwards, but the spirit of prophecy *was not in* us, and we cried rashly "no, no.") "It is said by

some persons that the Navy is in a bad way. I hope to be able to show you that such statements are groundless, and that the Navy was never more efficient—did I say never *more* efficient? Rather should I have said never *so* efficient" (faint cheers, but an awful sense of dread spreading gradually). "In the year 1876 there were 3 turret ships, 42 armour-plated ships of the line, 70 frigates, 12 rams, 70 corvettes, and 150 torpedo boats. In the year 1886 there are 7 turret ships, 48 armour-plated ships of the line, 70 frigates, 15 rams, 82 corvettes, and 175 torpedo boats" —(applause—such applause—it might have come from a cemetery at night. I heard Snivers mutter, "This man is like a blooming inventory;" while Mrs. Noodler snored gently, and her head showed an alarming tendency to droop on to my shoulder). "Take our guns again" (we signified by clinking of plates and a buzz of conversation on other subjects an ardent desire that the speaker would take our guns and walk off with them). "In 1876 we had 4 eighty-ton guns, 10 guns ranging from 40 to 60 tons" (clink, clink, clink, went the plates), "and 4,586 other pieces of ordnance. In 1886 we have 6 eighty-ton guns" (a perfect fusillade of clink, clink, clink, which made Mrs Noodler wake up and ask me if the Sultan of Botoo's private band was playing somewhere), "14 guns ranging from 40 to 60 tons, and 5237 other pieces of ordnance. Take our sailors again"—but this was really too much for human endurance.

The chairman, who had been fidgeting to such an extent that I thought he would fairly have stood on his head, wrote something on a slip of paper and passed it down to the Admiral. I don't know what he said, but it caught the statistical jack tar somewhere between wind and water,

for he subsided, as if he had been shot, without another word.

The last of the trio, Lieutenant Snutberry, alone remained, and he accordingly rose from his seat to speak for the Reserved Forces, which he appropriately did with a good deal of reserved force. For an amateur son of Mars, he was a decidedly mild-looking young man, and the circumstance of his substituting "w" for "r," and giving a little nervous gulp at intervals like a chicken with a sore throat, did not tend to remove that impression. The unutterable scorn with which General Pipeclay surveyed him was beautiful to witness.

"Your Highness, my lords, ladies, and gentlemen (gulp),—On behalf of the Weserved Forces, I thank you vewy much indeed (gulp) for so kindly dwinking their health on this vewy intewesting occasion (gulp). Genewal Pipeclay has claimed for the Army that they always twy to do their duty" (General Pipeclay glared at this point as if he thought it most confounded impudence of this toy soldier to quote his remarks). "The Weserved Forces have never yet been wequired to wespond to the battle cwy (gulp), though the militia once gawisonned vawious ports on the Mediterwanean in a gweat war; but if the twumpet should wesound (gulp), I twust they would be weady to answer-wit (gulp), and pwove that they are no dwawing-woom war-wiors (gulp) but twue Bwitons and bwave comwades" (gulp).

All this of course had been a sort of preliminary canter to *the* big toast of the evening—"His Highness, the Sultan of Botoo," and now the chairman fired off that gun. The Sultan must have heard the sound, because he sat on the *chairman's right* hand, but he certainly could not have

followed the argument very closely, for I was given to understand by Snivers that with the exception of "tankoo" and "me welly well" and "Ow—de—do—o" that worthy potentate could not speak, and did not understand a word of English. However, we applauded every sentence loudly, and Mrs. Noodler tapped her hand with her fan with all her might, and made as much noise as a tom-tom, though not in the least aware of it. And we rose as one man (and Mrs. Noodler) and drank the toast and bowed at the old fellow, and the band struck up his National Anthem again. And then the native interpreter told him what it was all about, or as much as he remembered, and filled up the open spaces with some of his own ideas; and then the Sultan rose to return thanks, and this is a faithful representation of how he did it upon my honour, and if you don't believe me you can ask Mrs. Noodler.

"Meely—Meely—Woo—low."

Interpreter—"His Highness is deeply gratified."

"Chuah—Ropoi—Saggera—baggera—Pom—Pom."

Interpreter—"For you him asking to this feast kindly."

"Walloo—Balloo—Choggermi—Smag."

[We knew that had something to do with the heart because His Highness put his royal hand on his royal stomach.]

Interpreter—"Which he in his inside heart will never forget."

"Gramut—cheeso—nipwip—spilopal."

Interpreter—"His Highness of the said of him things kind feels unworthy."

"Cham—chum—nosebag—ditsup—shamel—gagrib."

Interpreter—"He thinks your country magnificent, most great."

"Flapto—gug—gug—Tolly—wolly—Shinbo."

Interpreter—"Although some months the sun not shines very little never."

"Gov—ler—gooler."

[With an exquisitely pathetic and at the same time kingly gesture the Sultan here bent down and apparently tried to put his head in his finger-glass.]

Interpreter—"His Highness feels grieved."

"Veali—Veali—Katchewano—goroo—cop."

Interpreter—"His Highness still feels sorrowing."

"Flotsam—Cambo—Kusmat—Hobee—Kristal—smufflo Alkaram—gobeeshla."

Interpreter—"But hopes to see his friends here again day some and wishes nice all."

After this exciting episode there was a pleasant little surprise in store for us. The interpreter whispered to the chairman, and then spoke to the Sultan, and then spoke to two of the Sultan's suite, and then to the Sultan, and then to the chairman again, and then to two members of the suite. I was a little curious myself to know what it all meant, and I really thought Mrs. Noodler would have gone mad. But the murder soon came out, for the chairman rose and announced that Prince Natibaba Shandredan had most kindly consented to sing a comic song very popular at all the Music Halls in Botoo. The announcement naturally excited great interest, and even the professional ladies and gentlemen drew back the curtain in the corner to see and hear better. This was how the song went:—

(*Piano*)

Wo — Wo
Wo — Wo
Wo — Wo
Wo — Wo

(*Crescendo*) | jaggar—jaggar pestaboila—Horse-marina—chow

(*Piano*)

Gum — gum
Gum — gum
Gum — gum
Gum — gum

(*Crescendo*) | Stoker—poker—Tinpotinna—Muzzle—bow—wow—wow

(*Pianissimo*)

Jam — jam
Jam — jam
Jam — jam
Jam — jam

(*Forte*) | Washee—Washee—Mangoletta-ereza—jolli-row

(*Con molto Expressione*)

Toe — toe
Toe — toe
Toe — toe
Toe — toe

(*Fortissimo*) | Kicka—wicka—Bootsa—shorza—Shantsing—nomore—now.

I do not know whether this soothing ditty made Snivers realise acutely that he had been torn from my sister, but immediately it was over he said to me quite rudely—

"Let's go home now."

"My dear Snivers," I answered in a tone of alarm, "you're not serious. Why the toast list isn't more than half over, and there's another song and all sorts of things to come."

"Toasts and song be blowed; I've had enough of it, and I want to go."

"But *I* don't, Snivers."

"Well then, you can stay with that griffin on the other side of you."

The griffin was Mrs. Noodler, and Snivers' tone was simply brutal.

"No, I can't, because we've only got one ticket for our two hats, and if you give it up I shan't be believed when I ask for mine."

"Stuff."

"My dear Snivers," said I with an air of indescribable dignity, "I must ask you to withdraw the word stuff, or I shall be under the painful necessity of naming to my sister that her brother has been insulted by him to whom her young heart has been somewhat precipitately given. I may point out that such a communication might cause a revulsion of feeling on the part of my sister towards the party in question."

Snivers turned pale, and seizing my hand convulsively pulled it in a painfully embarrassing and public manner like a bell for several minutes, and then cried tears of repentance. I never felt so awkward in my life. However, I had gained my point, and Snivers was conquered. I think he would have stayed a fortnight if I had demanded it of him. Almost immediately after this painful incident a member of the Sultan's suite who was sitting not far from us caught sight of Snivers, and recalled him as having seen the Sultan in his own country and his own pink bath. His eyes lighted up with recognition, and nothing would do but he must leave his seat and come round. Mrs. Noodler, who had been dozing, woke up at once, and I will confess that my own curiosity was a bit roused.

I rather expected that the gentleman would want to rub his nose against Snivers' nose, or something of that kind, but not a bit of it. He shook hands and said "Ow you do" in a truly British fashion. Snivers became quite the *centre* of observation just round us, and I felt important

myself. I should have looked so too, perhaps, if Mrs. Noodler had not leant right across me in the most obtrusive manner to stare at the foreigner.

"Who is it?" she asked in her abominable hoarse whisper.

"I don't know," answered I testily—I admit testily. I turned away as much as I could turn away from a person stretching right across me, and murmured to Snivers "Introduce me."

Snivers did his best, considering that neither of them could understand more than a very few words the other one said. But Mrs. Noodler and I were so mixed up together that the foreign gentleman thought Snivers wanted to introduce her, and drew another equally erroneous conclusion. He shook hands warmly with old mother Noodler, and grinning all over his face shook his head at Snivers in a most arch manner, "Wife—not know married."

With a look of horror, Snivers started back and shook his head till I thought it would roll off.

"No, no, no, no, no, no, no. Not married. Wrong—mistake, blooming error. Don't know her. This is my friend."

"What are they talking about?" asked Mrs. Noodler of me.

"The gentleman made a little mistake," I answered, with a last effort to be delicate and polite to that awful woman.

"What did he say he would take?"

I could not stand it. I am ashamed of myself now, but that woman would have made a saint misbehave. I roared out.

"Didn't say he would take anything. Thought my friend

Mr. Snivers had taken you, and Mr. Snivers says he would die first. So would I." Mind I don't defend that brutal speech. I was sorry for it almost before the words were out. I only mention it because I wish to be truthful, and do not want you to think me a more noble man than I really am.

Mrs. Noodler seemed quite stunned for a moment, and then she—well, she spoke to me. I would rather not record that little bit, if you don't mind. We all have to take gruel and put our feet in hot water sometimes, but we don't do it in public. Anyhow Mrs. Noodler left.

My sense of shame seemed to take a good deal of glitter out of the entertainment, and when Snivers managed to make the member of the suite understand that I was a bosom friend of his (I forget how he did it, but I think he put both his arms round me and then hit the oriental person in a sympathetic manner in the chest), and the oriental person shook hands with me, I cared no more than if he had been a street tumbler. Neither did I pay any heed to the toasts that followed. I don't even remember what they were—till we came to the last one. By that time I had recovered my spirits, and the toast itself roused me to enthusiasm, as you will readily believe when I tell you that it was "The Ladies." It was proposed by the chairman and responded to by Lieutenant Snutberry, who was the youngest bachelor present, and had been fixed on by the chairman, who as I before remarked had a sly sense of humour. The chairman had given Snutberry a little warning, and he rose to the situation in the most admirable manner.

"*Your* Highness, my lords, ladies, and gentlemen," said

the chairman, "before separating to-night there remains one toast which I must not omit to propose. I mean that of 'The Ladies'" (great applause. Snivers thought of my sister again, and clapped till the beads of perspiration stood out on his forehead). "I need not enlarge on their graces or their many noble qualities" (I looked at Mrs. Noodler's vacant seat and felt like a convict), "for we are all husbands, fathers, sons, or may I say it—lovers" (Snivers murmured audibly though quite unconsciously, "Yes, *do* say lovers"), "and we know, or ought to know, what a blessed part the ladies play in the lives of us men" (the interpreter was translating hard to the Sultan all this time, and I thought somehow there was a look on the royal countenance which seemed to imply that, admitting all this, still he could have put up with less than eight of these blessings—but it may have been my fancy). "I will not at this late hour say more, but will ask you to drink the toast, with which I couple the name of Lieutenant Snutberry, as the youngest bachelor present."

The toast was drunk enthusiastically and then Snutberry appeared on the scene. He blushed violently; but that was only natural. I should have done so myself twenty years ago.

"Your Highness, my lords and gentlemen (gulp),—On behalf of the ladies I weturn you our gwateful and twuest thanks (gulp) for the gwacious and genewous manner in which this toast has been pwoposed and weceived (gulp). We feel vewy pwoud that we should be weferred to in such words of pwaise (gulp), and to know that we are pwized and appweciated (gulp). We cannot all be mawied, because there ware too many of us; but we can all twy our best to be

so (gulp). If we cannot follow the battle-flag, we can join the wed cwoss and dwess wounds (gulp); and some of us have done hewoic acts before now, and some of us will do hewoic acts again (gulp). You will all wecollect the bwavery of — I don't quite wecall the lady's name now — but I wemember it was vewy bwave (gulp). Once more I thank you, and conclude with the noble lines (gulp):—

> "Oh! woman in our wour wof ease,
> Uncertain, coy, and hard to please;
> But when with pain is wacked the bwow
> A ministerwing angel thou."

I went off with Snivers after that, and as he had a very weak head and had foolishly taken a good deal of champagne during the evening, I have every reason to believe that lines three and four came into active operation as between him and my sister on the following day. At least I saw him on our drawing-room sofa with a wet towel round his head, and my sister leaning over him as if his was the only head worth speaking of that had ever ached since the time of Adam.

I ought not to forget though, by the by, that just as we were leaving, the curtain drew back and the professional singers gave the following parting salvo to the Sultan:

> "Hulla—bulla—roo,
> Oh! Sultan of Botoo,
> We all are here to speed the parting guest,
> You have been most popular,
> And one and all we are
> Most anxious for your autograph and crest.
>
> You will carry our best wishes
> To your land of curry dishes,
> And we trust your people all with joy will shout,

That you'll find your eight wives well
When you ring the area bell,
And your mother quite aware that you've been out.

Hulla—bulla—roo,
Oh ! Sultan of Botoo,
We bid you farewell only for a while,
For we trust some future day
You'll another visit pay
To the many friends you leave on this here isle."

MY DENTIST.

A HIGHLY respectable house in a gloomy looking street. The dentist does not live there—probably because his wife and daughters do not like the observations of their visitors to be interrupted by resounding shrieks proceeding at intervals from the back parlour. He occupies only the ground floor, whereof the first room is used as a waiting-room, and the back-room is used—but I must not anticipate.

Upon the first door is a very neat brass-plate, indicating that Mr. Pullemout is a surgeon-dentist. At the side of the door is a bell which by a somewhat hollow piece of pleasantry has the word "Visitors" written on it. You ring this bell, and are at once conscious, first that at the moment of doing so the pain in that tooth which has been driving you mad for a fortnight has entirely disappeared, and secondly, that the bell responds to your touch with the most aggravating promptitude—that it gives you no decent time for considering whether after all you will not walk on, and look in next Thursday instead. You are just coming out of this reflection, and are beginning to think that perhaps even now you can get round the corner without being seen, when the door opens and you perceive a sepulchral looking man-servant, dressed in a complete suit of black, who surveys you with the air of one who is saying inwardly,

"Yet another—the fifteenth to-day. Mine is indeed a painful situation."

You ask whether Mr. Pullemout is in—hoping as you never hoped anything before, that Mr. Pullemout is not in—and the man, with the sense of responsibility of one who is the bearer of evil news, assures you that Mr. Pullemout is in and will soon be disengaged. You take out your watch and ask how soon Mr. Pullemout will be disengaged, with a faint hope that you may hinge on this an excuse for escaping. The words have scarcely left your mouth when a loud yell (accompanied probably by a double tooth), leaves the mouth of a victim at the back of the premises. Whereupon the man-servant, with funereal solemnity, assures you that Mr. Pullemout will be free in a very few minutes, and conducts you into the front room.

In this room you find a round table in the middle, with illustrated books and periodicals upon it, and you observe that it is provided with a large number of chairs. No one about to see Mr. Pullemout has ever been known to look at a book or periodical or sit upon a chair, but people who go into the room merely because they have come with some one else for company, and without any intention of having a personal transaction with that gentleman, may be noticed to maintain the most equable spirits, and to devour the literature and make themselves extremely comfortable on the chairs. This is human nature.

You cannot quite make up your mind whether you hope Mr. Pullemout will really be disengaged soon or not, but you rather think you should like him not to be ready for you just yet. You walk up and down the room, and stand at the window occasionally, to glare out savagely at people

who are passing unconcernedly by the door, as if there were no such things as dentists, and a fellow-creature were not about to undergo torments. Your reflections are interrupted occasionally by such incidents as the ringing of a bell at the back of the house, followed by the opening of a door and the muffled sound of a voice which appears to be saying in a tone of authority, "Another jug of warm water," followed in turn by a shuffling of feet along the passage, and then the slamming of the same door. But beyond these tragic indications you are left in the silence of the tomb.

This state of things appears to last many hours—in fact, about fifteen minutes,—when the door opens and the sorrowful man-servant enters and informs you that Mr. Pullemout will be "happy" to see you. He says "happy" as if he would like to add, "Poor wretch, I know full well what *your* sentiments are as to seeing *him.*"

A minute afterwards and you are seated in a most repulsively comfortable chair, with your head thrown back in a convenient position for Mr. Pullemout to cut it off if so disposed and a napkin inserted in your mouth in such wise as to preclude the possibility of any utterance but a despairing gurgle. In this helpless situation Mr. Pullemout attacks your mouth with a complicated steel instrument, which he uses to discover where your nerves are, preparatory to playing on them with another instrument. He asks you at intervals to let him know whether he is hurting you, though well aware that he has deprived you of the power of retorting upon him, and at intervals he refers in a light and pleasing manner to current topics of the day.

If the result of this process is to satisfy Mr. Pullemout

that the tooth can be stopped, he operates upon it with more instruments, and brings into requisition an apparatus the properties of which appear to lie somewhere midway between those of a coffee-mill and a sewing-machine. This he works with a treadle, and he fastens the end to something which he guides into the recesses of your hapless tooth. During this process you feel as if large splinters were flying from you, and you tingle down to your feet with a sensation of having somehow become a passive part of a buzzing piece of machinery.

If Mr. Pullemout is of opinion that the molar is past stoppage, he says with an airy smile, "I think *we* must have this one out," as if he were going halves with you in the operation, instead of its being perfectly obvious that he will be at the harmless end of the forceps, while you are at its business extremity. And then he rings for a jug of warm water with a pretence of indifference, as if he wanted it for shaving, or washing his hands, or anything but its real horrid purpose. And then he advances upon you with the forceps, which he ostentatiously affects to conceal up his arm, though you can see the instrument perfectly well all the time. And then he puts a gag in your mouth, which makes you feel as if your upper jaw and your lower jaw would never have anything in common again. And then Mr. Pullemout is ready for action, and during the next few minutes he is engaged in a pleasant and stimulating muscular exercise, in which you can only join effectively, to the extent of kicking out your legs, while your feelings are represented by muffled and gagged observations of a most poignant character.

CROSSING THE CHANNEL.

THIS truly delightful experience befell me for the first time when I was a very small boy. "Paris in 8½ hours" had not been dreamt of then; indeed, I don't much fancy that railways were invented: at all events, I certify that Victoria Station was represented by a canal, or a bridge, or houses, or anything in the world most removed from its present similitude, and that what is now Charing Cross Station was Hungerford Fish and Pork Market, and smelt accordingly. Furthermore, I state that, in common with several brothers and sisters, I was conveyed at night to London Bridge, and shot into the cabin of a steamer, from which I did not emerge until Boulogne was reached. I believe we had the cabin to ourselves, but, as we were a large family, and no one else could possibly have got more than a head and neck inside the door when we were all there, it was not perhaps so grand a distinction as it might look at first sight. The berths would not take in the whole party, and as I came very low down in the family list, it fell to my lot to go through that charming process known as having a bed made up on the floor. I remember that my nurse, being a somewhat unreasonable female, shook me at intervals because I did not instantly fall into a refreshing slumber amid such

distractions as a great lamp staring me right in the face; a hubbub of voices in the cabin; a general "chivy" going on all round me for articles of nocturnal wearing apparel which had been particularly meant to be kept out and had, for that very reason, gravitated to the very bottom of the most out-of-the-way places possible; a violent quarrel between my eldest brother and my second sister touching the proprietorship of an orange, in the course of which they trod on my recumbent frame at intervals; a banging about of all sorts and sizes of packages on the deck above, with a running accompaniment of language in which I thought there must be a good many foreign words, because I could not understand them; and other little interruptions too numerous to mention. Of course I did go to sleep at last, as children will in all circumstances and places sooner or later, but I was awakened very early in the morning by the roars (I really cannot describe them in any other terms) of my younger sister who, being in much anguish, preferred at the top of her lungs a request, which in after life I have thought funny, that some one would "stop the bo-at." Very shortly afterwards I sympathised fully with her sentiments, and, I may say, joined in expressing them.

I believe that since those early days I have taken passage, at one time or another, on most of the Channel steamers, but I freely admit that I do as much of the journey as possible by land. When I start in the train, I usually go through a hollow mockery of assuring myself that it will be as calm as a duckpond. By the time I get half way I begin to realise that, perhaps, the breeze may be a little fresh. On arriving at the boat, I assume

a nautical air, and rather roll in my gait than otherwise, but this is mere subterfuge, for no sooner does my foot touch the deck, than I feel a sinking, and a swimming, and a giddiness, and an earnest desire to stand on my head instead of the other way up. I believe I once tried to whistle "Rule Britannia" just as the boat started, but I did not finish it.

It is my belief that that Channel journey never *is* calm. If you don't get the foaming billow in the first part of the passage, you always come on to it when you have rounded some horrid point, or got into some abominable current, or encountered some offensive swell. I have, over and over again, sat on deck as bold as brass, and really felt comparatively comfortable—equal, for instance, to meditating on boiled mutton or loin of pork—and all of a sudden, without any apparent reason, the vessel has begun to go up and down, and the spray to come over the side, and passengers who have been walking the deck to be precipitated against the baggage, or the funnel, or me, or any other object near at hand. And then I have realised almost as suddenly that I am not quite so well as I was just before, and then that I am really very much worse.

How I do dislike the people who are never ill on these occasions. I don't mean the people who tell you so on shore, because that is cheap glory, and there is always the hope that they are not speaking the truth. I mean the people who really don't mind being pitched and tossed about at sea and wonder that you do, and tell you, when you are feeling as if the tomb would be a blessed change, *that this is* nothing to what it was last Thursday week,

and that there is hardly any sea on, and that the rougher it is the better they like it; with other nauseating remarks.

And then the steward—but I really cannot go on, for the room begins to swim.

MY LORDS AND GENTLEMEN.

"My lords and gentlemen, please charge your glasses!" Every lord and gentleman immediately performs this feat, which sounds like an aggressive military direction but is really quite peaceful and friendly.

"My lords and gentlemen, the next toast which I have the honour to propose cannot fail to command in this assembly, or, indeed, wherever the English language is spoken—yes! I include even Whitechapel and the New Cut, Lambeth, where it is spoken only in a mitigated sense of the expression—an enthusiastic reception—[*Much cheering, though the gentlemen don't know yet what the toast is*]. I could fain have wished [*assumption of modest droop all over like an elderly fowl at roost*] that it had fallen into worthier hands [*the speaker suggests the idea of one who has accidentally caught the toast while playing ball in the back garden*], but of this, at least, I am sure, that though my language is feeble [*it is—and every one thinks so, but they shout* "no" *madly*] and words fail me [*they do—but every one shouts* "no" *madly again*] to do justice to the subject, still my feelings are true and sincere [*speaker, amid thunders of applause, places hand with dramatic action upon his stomach, thinking he identifies the region of the heart. He removes it,*

and resumes], and, as the poet says [*awkward pause. Speaker learnt this morning something some poet said somewhere, but can't remember now what it was*]—in fact, gentlemen, as I said before, my feelings are true and sincere. [*Hand again placed on stomach, but it doesn't bring the house down a second time.*] Gentlemen, er—err—err [*whirrs like a partridge at this point to gain time for an idea—it comes, but is not up to much*]—the toast which I have the honour to propose is a toast which, as I said just now, I am quite sure"—

Et sic ad infinitum. Ten minutes more of partridge whirrs—sentences that begin and won't finish—sentences that finish and won't begin—adjectives that resent contact with nouns—prepositions that govern nothing in particular—quotations born lame, and not properly remembered till the speaker is tucked up in bed that night and it is all too late to bring them forth—jokes that would have created roars of laughter but for the point being left out—touches of pathos marred by the speaker lowering his voice so that he has them all to himself—in short—I say, in short—an ordinary, average, every day, never omitted, compoundly-multiplied-in-the-course-of-the-evening, AFTER-DINNER SPEECH!

What mortal arrived at man's estate has not spent many a festive hour listening to this complacent, self-satisfying oratory and been the better for it? Whose bosom has not swelled at the announcement, that everybody then and there present is a rather better and more glorious fellow than any fellow that ever was, could, should, or might be? I declare, for myself, that I have sat and felt so morally elevated by those accents of unstinted adulation of all parties present—including me—as to completely forget till

the moment of awaking with a headache next morning that I ever stole those spoons, or forged that certificate, or garotted that old gentleman.

And if this is so of the listeners, what, oh! what about him who is asked to lift up his voice and address the company! Maybe when the fact is first whispered in his ear before dinner, he will feel a sinking and a cold clammy feeling; afterwards his soup will nearly choke him; he will push away the fish untasted; he will toy with a patty, and make poor practice with a duck and green peas; when accosted by his neighbour he will reply spasmodically and laugh at the wrong time; his brow will be knitted; he will upset the salad into his lap and knock over wine-glasses at intervals; his dinner napkin will slip, slide, fall, and curl round his arm, do anything on earth but remain on his lap. But does all this betoken anything unpleasant? No—a thousand times no. It means only that *the great mind is at work*, that the periods are being polished ready for use, that the quaint simile is being drilled to order, that the bubbling jest is being summoned for active duty, that pleasant topics are being marshalled into one harmonious whole, that the eye is getting ready to light up, the voice to rise and fall, the right arm to imitate the expressive domestic pump-handle when at work, the chest to inflate. Dinner indeed! Perish dinner when there are hearts to stir, an audience to electrify, digestions to assist, drowsy ones to lull to sleep, even waiters—yes, genius takes in all orders of creation, from the soaring eagle to the being in a fearfully and wonderfully worn out suit of dress clothes, who serves up the viands at a public dinner—to be droned *at* and bored to death.

Once only do I remember anything unpleasant in connection with an after-dinner speech, and even then the many were entertained though the unit suffered. The Warden of a great City Company had decided to identify a distinguished general with the toast of the Army, Navy, and Volunteers, and had learnt up various incidents of the general's career. The general at the last moment did not arrive, and the Warden had to substitute an uneventful sort of Major somebody instead. But the Warden's metaphors, his references to battles, and marches, and sieges, and all the rest of it, were fixed beyond recall, and when he rose to propose the toast, he imputed to that Major somebody most of the military achievements of the absent general, and what's more, he did it with an obvious conviction that it was all wrong somehow, but he could not help it, and it really was that general's fault for not coming. When the major rose to reply, his speech was chiefly devoted to confessions that he had not led this forlorn hope as stated by the Warden, that he did not spike that gun as remarked by ditto, that he was not present at the battle of Bubberov, that he rendered no assistance at the siege of Hokypokywum, and did not conduct the famous march from Golipimani to the Catgutka Pass, or swim across the foaming river Pomadariola in presence of the enemy in full accoutrements with a telegraph wire between his teeth and a crocodile firmly but courteously grasping his left leg. Not till he had shed all these coils wound round him by the Warden did that major get to the novel observation that the British army never was more, &c., &c., that it had inherited all the glorious, &c., &c., and whenever called upon would never fail, &c., &c.,

I remember also—stay, I think I hear an impatient little cough from the reader at the excessive length of these recollections; and I therefore rise to propose, not a toast, but a resolution which will command universal satisfaction, "that this apparently interminable paper do now conclude." Carried *nem con.*

MRS. DOXITER'S WATERPROOF.

If, in a character otherwise replete with weaknesses innumerable in quantity and profound in degree, I have a strong point—if there is one thing upon the strength of which I am entitled proudly to inflate my chest and do the nearest thing my physical conformation permits to slapping my own self upon my own back—it is gallantry. By gallantry I do not mean ogling and winking and leering and persecuting with unwelcome attentions, but real old-fashioned gallantry of the chivalrous kind, such as induces a man to get outside to oblige a middle-aged lady, or to carry a baby across Regent Street for a mother overladen with immature offspring and brown paper parcels. This is not an advertisement leading up to a solicitation of orders for wine, but a simple fact, and I put it in the foreground because it furnishes the key to the motives which prompted me to figure unintentionally as the hero of the following episode.

I was staying not long ago at a hotel in one of the principal towns in Holland, to which remarkably hilly and bracing country I had gone for a brief holiday with my wife. When we came down to the *table d'hôte* dinner on the first evening we found ourselves in the immediate neighbourhood of a good-looking and very festive British couple, who like ourselves had gone there on account of

the dry climate and mountain air, and had travelled to Rotterdam in the same steamer. We struck up an acquaintance almost immediately. The fact that both ladies had been very ill, and both gentlemen very well (or at least they said so), during a perfectly smooth passage, constituted an excellent starting-point for conversation, and when this was followed up by the usual discoveries of mutual friends and similarities of tastes, it will readily be imagined that intimacy progressed rapidly. The ladies became in fact inseparable, the gentlemen blew one compound cloud of tobacco between them, and we took to each other like ducks unto the water, only, if possible, sooner and more so.

The next morning at breakfast we again naturally met, and immediately flew to each other and made plans for doing everything together as long as we stayed. If there had been one plate large enough I think we should all have eaten out of it, but there was not, or if there was the waiter did not bring it up.

With this sacred bond strong upon us, we went to picture galleries, theatres, cafés, shops, everything that was to be seen (including a million or so of windmills and an odd thousand of rivers and canals) during the next two days, and on the third, which was also our last day, we agreed to make an expedition to a neighbouring town by rail. Every detail was planned, and shortly after breakfast we sallied forth in high spirits, tempered only by the pain of the approaching separation which we felt acutely.

It had promised early to be a brilliant day, and the glass had gone up so high that it was almost out of sight. Mrs. Doxiter—that was the lady's name—had presumed so far *on this as to* bring no cloak or wrap of any kind, but we

had not reached the station before it clouded over and rain began to fall in the manner in which I am given to understand it is wont to do in those parts. I should not have thought it was wanted myself, in a country where you can only keep your head above water by hopping from one windmill to another, but I suppose this is not my business, and no offence is meant to the watershed.

What was to be done? We had not left very much margin of time for catching the train and were a good long way from the hotel. But should I allow a lady figuring in an expedition in which I was taking a part to get perhaps chilled and wet through for want of her waterproof? Never! See page 139.

Almost before Mrs. Doxiter had time to utter a faint protest and look reproachfully at her husband for not offering to go instead, almost before they could give utterance to an expression of doubt as to whether I should be able to get back in time to catch the train, my well-made frame was in active motion, and I was speeding back to the hotel like a portly antelope.

When I arrived there I was naturally out of breath and unable to reply to some imbecile remark of the porter. I was also as naturally rather red in the face, being of a full habit and not now-a-days accustomed to violent exertion.

It was the work of a moment to mount the stairs and reach the second floor, but then came a check. Where was Mr. and Mrs. Doxiter's room. I knew it was on the second floor, because my wife had said that it was close to ours. But there were many rooms on that floor.

I looked round for the chamber-maid but she was not to be seen. Ah! now I remembered that my wife had said

that it was just opposite ours. Capital! There was the room, sure enough, and in I went.

A hasty look round revealed to me a profusion of female attire, and as luck would have it, prominent among the apparel was the waterproof cloak—a most elegant garment of check pattern, not to be confounded for a moment with the ordinary black shiny article—hanging on the back of a chair and just ready to my hand. Glowing with triumph I emerged from the room to run almost into the arms of the chamber-maid. She looked at the cloak, uttered in her native tongue an exclamation apparently made up in the proportions of nineteen consonants to one vowel, and threw up both hands. I did not stay to inquire where she felt it, but sped down the stairs, and on the way met a French lady whom I had noticed at dinner the night before. I was conscious as I passed that she also looked at the cloak, also made a remark in her native tongue, and also threw up both hands. I seemed likewise at the same moment to catch a sound of some one descending the stairs after me, and when I got to the hall I heard excited female voices above. As I was leaving the hotel I passed the porter. He too looked at the cloak, uttered an exclamation in his native tongue, and threw up both his hands.

It may seem odd that this remarkable succession of gestures did not cause me to pause, and ask myself what they meant, but you must please recollect that I was making with all my might for a railway station, and merely caught the impression of what I have described, in a passing panorama which only lasted for a few moments. Anyhow I was off again as hard as I could go, which was not quite as hard as before, because I was a trifle blown and had to *carry the* cloak.

I suppose I had covered about a couple of hundred yards when I became aware that there was a commotion behind me, and had added about another fifty when some one caught me by the arm in a forcible manner and pulled me up short. Turning angrily to see what was the matter, I perceived that my assailant was a long angular Dutchman. And here please let me observe in a parenthesis, that the tradition about Dutchmen and their trousers, in connection with rotundity and patches of blue sky, is neither more nor less than a horrid fraud. I hardly saw a real balloon-shaped mynheer the whole time, and all I can say is, that if I go on as I am doing now, I shall require a much larger measure myself than any Dutchman I clapped eyes on in that same country. In answer to my indignant look and British invectives the man pointed his hand towards an advancing procession as a matter concerning me personally; which it most undoubtedly and unpleasantly did.

First, I beheld the boy in buttons from our hotel, who had outstripped the rest. Not long after him was the porter. Then came the two waiters side by side. Then the landlord. Then the French lady and the chamber-maid. They were all running, all red in the face, and all gesticulating at me. Before I could recover from my bewilderment the boy in buttons was up to me. He instantly caught hold of Mrs. Doxiter's waterproof, which I struggled to retain. In another instant the boots had caught hold of the boy's jacket, the porter was holding on to the boots, the waiters were holding on to the porter, the landlord had a tail of each waiter as if he were driving a pair, and the French lady and the chamber-maid had an arm each round the landlord. I failed of course to win the

tug of war against such overwhelming odds, and had to relinquish my colours. I need hardly add that a crowd of idlers instantly collected.

Purple with rage, I demanded of the landlord, who spoke rather broken English, the reason for this outrage.

"Reason, you say? You do steal, and then you ask why you may not do so. Is that it?"

"Steal! What do you mean?" I roared.

"Zis cloak, you take it from a lady's room. You come out of ze room and are seen by ze chambermaid, ze lady who it own, ze porter, all ze world. You puff, you pant, you look red in ze face, and str-r-r-range. You are speaked wiz and say noting, you r-r-r-un away and we r-r-r-un after you and took you with ze stoled cloak upon your arm. It is so clear as mud."

"This cloak, you old fool! It belongs to Mrs. Doxiter, and I came to fetch it because it rained and she wanted it. You shall apologise for this on your knees, or I'll have justice, if there is any in this land—I mean water."

The landlord turned to the French lady and spoke a few words in French, which though unfortunately not well up in that tongue, I followed pretty well. He told her what I had said as to the ownership of the garment.

Then she went for me—went for me as only an excited Gallic female can. It fairly rained 'Mon Dieus.' I divined at once that the waterproof was hers, and that I had made a mistake, and gone into the wrong room, and that all this fuss had arisen in consequence. Catching an opportunity when she was obliged to stop for breath before unloading a fresh cargo of 'Mon Dieus,' I again turned to the land-*lord in savage* irony.

"I suppose this all means that I have made a mistake and taken the wrong cloak. I am sorry if the lady is annoyed, and should have been happy to apologise to her if this utterly unnecessary and most objectionable public disturbance had not been made about nothing. My friends are waiting at the station, and as I am already late for the train, and have to turn down the ninth canal to the right, and the fourth river to the left, besides crossing an estuary, before I can get there, you must excuse me if I clear out."

Without waiting for a reply, I made a rapid movement, but instantly I felt a hand upon me, and looking along the arm which it represented I perceived, to my unspeakable horror, disgust, and rage, that I was in the grasp of a Dutch policeman with a real sword, who had just come up.

For the third time I addressed myself to the landlord as the only person able to comprehend me.

"You scoundrel, if you don't tell this man to let me go this instant, I'll have you and your infernal hotel shown up in every guide-book in Europe."

The landlord shrugged his shoulders.

"You talk so grand, but how I believe or care what you say. You come for two-tree days, you bring hardly not any baggage, you take a cloak from ze room of zis lady, you run off wiz it. Your party, where are they? not here! How str-r-range it all appear."

A sort of grim despair settled on me and I prepared for the worst. When I do that I become comparatively cheerful. I turned to the policeman who, I knew, could not understand a word I said, thinking that I might thus indirectly rile the landlord.

"Is the place of execution handy, old gas-piping?"

gave him that name because he had some of that material apparently at the top of his helmet.

"Ha?"

"Do you generally hang, or guillotine, or strangle, or drown criminals here? Drowning would come cheapest, I should think, as, wherever the prison was, you would not have far to go."

"Ha?"

"I suppose this man finds it very convenient to get visitors who come to his hotel put out of the way and then stick to their effects, doesn't he? My shepherd's plaid trousers will fit him exactly, and I fancy my dress boots will come in handy, as his foot looks about of a size with mine."

This cut was more than mine host could stand.

"You are a tief, a scoundr-r-rel, a villain, you go to pr-r-rison and I expose your cr-r-r-rime."

Then he added a few words rapidly to the myrmidon of the Dutch law, and I was walked off, with a jeering crowd at my heels, to what we should call a police-station, and they call something with four k's and five j's in it.

On arrival I was taken into a room with little doors all round it, which I rightly conjectured to lead into cells. The landlord, who had followed close at my heels, was interrogated by an officer, whom I supposed to be one in authority, from the fact of his having a better quality of gas-piping in his helmet, and a finer uniform, and from his being deferentially addressed by my captor. Then one of the little doors was opened and I was thrust in like a loaf into an oven,—a Dutch oven. I could hear indistinctly some further conversation in the adjoining room, and then the *excited and angry* voice of my landlord died away, and I *inferred that* he had gone off.

For six mortal hours I remained in that cell, without meat or drink, or tobacco or newspaper, or novel, without even a railway guide, which not very inviting form of publication I should have eagerly read in the circumstances. Torn from my wife, separated from the Doxiters, imprisoned as a common hotel thief, deprived of my last day's outing, there I sat on a stone bench hoping more faintly every moment that my friends would return and all be explained. Why did they not come? Would they ever come? Had they been put off the scent by some lying tale of the landlord? Should I be sent secretly to some Dutch penal settlement, under the name of No. 43, and never more be traced until I returned home, a sort of Rip Van Winkle, at the age of sixty, to find my wife married to another, and myself only able to tell my story in broken Dutch, and probably driven from the door as a foreign impostor?

But at last Lucknow was relieved. I heard an indistinct hubbub of familiar voices. A key was inserted in the door of my cell, the lock was undone, the door was opened, and I emerged from the same to undergo the following processes.

My wife embraced me fondly. Oh! moderate joy!

Mrs. Doxiter hysterically followed suit. Oh! rapt—well, well, never mind.

Mr. Doxiter warmly shook my hand. So, so.

The chambermaid impulsively kissed me. Not bad.

The French lady placed her ugly head on my shoulder. Confound her.

The boy in buttons clasped my knees. Ridiculous.

The boots, the porter, and the two waiters cried all over me. Disgusting.

The landlord grovelled before me on his knees. *Sickening.*

The policeman wanted to hug me, but one must draw the line somewhere, and I drew it there.

When something like coherence was restored, I found that they had all got into the train waiting for me; that Mr. Doxiter felt certain he saw me rush on to the platform, and get into a carriage at the back of the train just before the time came for starting; that in that belief they had all gone, but had found no me when they got out; that they waited for hours, expecting me to follow by every train that came in; that they ultimately came back again, much alarmed, to the hotel and learnt what had happened; that they thereupon rushed off to the English consul and very speedily reduced the whole establishment to sackcloth and ashes on my account.

A procession was formed and I returned to the hotel in triumph. If I had wanted to do so, I could have walked over the prostrate bodies of everybody employed in that establishment till next morning when we left, and as for the landlord, his groans of self-abasement and contrition were awful to hear. Of course I breathed a good deal of fire and slaughter at first, but I cooled down gradually, and being of a naturally mild disposition I ultimately melted and forgave all.

When we started next morning our modest luggage was augmented by three large bouquets, six hams, two boxes of sweetmeats, and an album containing photographs of the neighbourhood, all representing penitential offerings from the establishment. As for the landlord, he danced round the fly as if he were sacrificing to an irritated pagan god, and as we moved off he cried after me in tones of heart-broken supplication—

"*Oh sair,* good sair, you NO tell ze guide-books."

SITTING UP LATE.

If early to bed and early to rise really does make a man healthy and wealthy and wise, Jenkins ought to have a complication of disorders, to be in the receipt of out-door parochial relief, and in a state of imbecile foolishness of mind—because he certainly never does go to bed early, and as certainly always does get up late. Nevertheless, I must admit that Jenkins flourishes, and what is more, he flourishes partly at my expense. This seems mysterious, but I will expound.

I always get up early. Not that I have any particular ambition to see the sun rise, or to hear the lark sing, or because of the above proverb, or from inability to sleep on; but because I cannot help myself. I am as morally bound to get up at a certain hour as if I lived in a common lodging-house, and the rope supporting my couch were let down by the proprietor when I had had my fourpenny sleep. Consequently by a certain time in the evening, if not sustained by a mother's tea meeting or any other mad form of excitement, I am ready to go to bed. It is exactly at this period that Jenkins does what he describes as "just dropping in to have a smoke." I receive him with a hollow pretence of cordiality in my library (I call it a library because there are books in it, and dismiss instantly without

wages any servant who presumes to refer to it as master's little room), offer him a chair, and call for spirituous refreshment. He proceeds to light a pipe and do what he playfully calls blowing a cloud. He blows most of it into my eyes, nose, and mouth, and I cannot return the compliment because smoking makes me very ill. I therefore sit opposite to him, and it is my aim to look cheerful.

This, be it remarked, is Jenkins' very liveliest period of his waking day. Having risen at about eleven, he is as fresh as possible, and being in a position to rise to-morrow at the same hour, or any later period he fancies, he has no fear of consequences before his eyes. I, on the contrary, feel that the scanty hours of my night's rest are slipping away while I am sitting up and being smoked at. That is our starting-point.

What happens is this. Jenkins begins to talk hard. I join in when necessary, and wonder when he will begin to think of going. I get a momentary gleam of hope when he knocks the ashes out of his pipe—I lose it and sink into despair when he charges it afresh as if he had only just commenced. Then I pass through the following phases:—

(1.) My eyes become heavy;

(2.) They close altogether at intervals;

(3.) I find my head in front of me quite unexpectedly;

(4.) When I bring it the right way up again it falls over on one side;

(5.) I follow Jenkins' argument with difficulty;

(6.) I am not certain whether Jenkins is addressing his remarks to me or to my grandmother who has been dead fifteen years.

(7.) Jenkins' voice appears to come sometimes from the

coal cellar down below, occasionally from the top of a distant hill, and now and again to return to my room with startling suddenness;

(8.) Jenkins, to the best of my belief, has gone out for a long walk, and I have not gone with him, but he is, nevertheless, still talking to me. This strikes me as rather, but not very, odd;

(9.) I become totally oblivious of Jenkins;

(10.) I am brought to sublunary consciousness by Jenkins getting up noisily and saying he thinks he will turn in. He adds pleasantly, while I shiver and feel unutterably wretched, "You're ready to go to bed, too, I expect, old chap (ready indeed!); hope I haven't kept you up." Being a distant relation of the boy who stood on the burning deck, I do not answer to this that I am not ready to go to bed, or that he has not kept me up. I say that it doesn't matter. Even that is not quite worthy of my connection with the b.w.s.o.t.b.d., because it does matter a good deal to me.

Hereupon Jenkins strolls off to wallow in bed for about eleven hours, while I creep upstairs to get what change I can out of a meagre six.

When first Jenkins came about the place I used to hire the services of my wife to rout him. She would come into my little—quite a slip, I mean, of course, my library—and sit opposite to him, and declare that she did not mind smoking in the least, but cough sepulchrally at intervals. This producing no result, she folded her elbows and yawned (as per previous arrangement with me) unreservedly and manifestly in his face. Nothing coming of this she would proceed to

remark sympathetically (also as per previous arrangement) that I looked tired, and that she thought I wanted a good night's rest more than anything. To this *Jenkins feelingly assented*, but never an inch did he budge, and at last I nobly released my wife from the struggle and sent her to bed.

Jenkins was not naturally an unfeeling ruffian—I have seen him give a penny to an eminently undeserving beggar myself—but he failed altogether to take in how handicapped I was at the other end of bed-time as compared with himself. Peace to his ashes. He is still living.

It seems wonderful to me now; but there was a time when I minded going to bed. I refer to childhood's hour, when I used to be captured and led off to be put to bed by a hireling with the attendant rites and ceremonies of dabbing soap in my eyes, and rubbing me violently with a hard towel and otherwise assaulting me. This occurred sometimes when festivities were afloat downstairs, and on such maddening occasions I have lain in bed horribly awake and listening to music and voices until I could bear it no longer, and have sneaked out on to the stairs in my night-gown to spy out the land.

At another stage of my life, when I had recently emerged from any obligation as to the hour of my retirement, I used to assert my manliness by staying up late on purpose to stay up late, and with the express object also of being in a position to say that I stayed up late. Once I carried this the length of announcing an intention to stay up all night. It happened in this wise: that the University Boat-Race was going to be rowed at an unearthly hour in the morning, and I, with two or three other experienced men of the world of *about seventeen* years of age, decided that it would be non-

sense to go to bed, and we would sit up and talk and play whist till it was time to start. We began by playing whist till the cards fell out of our hands; we continued by talking at an average rate of one meaningless remark between the party in about ten minutes; and we concluded by sneaking into bed about three hours before the time at which we had to rise: and as this happened some time ago, I will now unreservedly admit that a more bloodshot-eyed, half-asleep, washed out, spiritless, peevish—(yes, positively peevish, though I say it), discontented, for-goodness-sake-put-me-in-my-little-bed-mother, lot of young gentlemen never before or since went forth on an expedition of pleasure.

But come, come, this won't do. Here am I, writing away at this paper, and it's getting quite late. Half-past ten as I'm a sinner. Did you ring, sir? Yes, Mary, I did. Please bring me a bottle of soda-water, and, perhaps, as I don't feel very well this evening, you may just cover the bottom of the glass with milk, or (if you haven't any fresh milk) whiskey. As soon as you can, please, because I'm just going to bed. Thank you, Mary. No milk in the house? Never mind, thank you, I can manage with whiskey to-night —in fact, I rather prefer it.

THAMES FISHING.

I NEVER tried to catch the lordly salmon or the speckled trout —I might even go so far as to say, if the expression were not liable to misconstruction, that I never rose to a fly—but in a humble way I have always been fond of the gentle art. I call it the gentle art, not because I seek to make a pun, but because that is the right expression. It is just possible, that if the sinuous worm and the lively minnow could deliver their sentiments, they would dispute the adjective; but as they cannot, I cheerfully adopt the convenient fiction that they are totally insensible to pain, and rather prefer being impaled on a hook than otherwise.

I have angled principally on the Thames, and have devoted my attention much to the pike. He has not repaid my services by devoting himself to me, having, in truth, shown a decided tendency to avoid me; but in the course of pleasant hours spent in this occupation, I have learnt many profitable things, and I have collected them here, in a convenient form for adaptation to Latin exercises.

THE PROFESSIONAL THAMES FISHERMAN.

He is the most accomplished impostor in Europe.

He drinks as much as you will give him in the course of

the day and as much more as he can get. Also he prefers it strong.

You never have any sport with him to-day worth speaking of, but if you had only been down last Thursday week, or could come next November, or the weeds were down, or the water were up, or the wind wasn't where it is but somewhere else, or your tackle were lighter, or something else had or had not happened which had not or had happened, you would infallibly have secured a splendid basket of fish. Furthermore, in the course of the day he contradicts himself hopelessly as to the cause of your want of success.

He knows all about fishing. No other fisherman in his vicinity does. The others take people out in punts and call themselves fishermen, but might just as well stay at home.

When you catch a fish it is usually small; when you miss one he opines confidently that it was immense.

He beguiles the hours of a blank day with miraculous anecdotes of captures of fish in the spots to which he takes you. In the early part of the day this process sustains your bosom with hope. Later on you wonder whether a jury would bring in justifiable homicide.

He has no ideas on any subject whatever outside his punt and the riverside inns. If you suggest that the river winds, he rejoins that it *do* wind. If you remark that the river is low, he clinches the observation by saying that it *be* low. If you comment on the circumstance that a new weir has been made since you were last here, you elicit the sparkling retort that it ain't been made not so very long since neither.

His aquatic pursuits do not include active intercourse

with water to any appreciable extent. We never value what we can enjoy without difficulty.

His happiest moments are when he can set you to work to catch gudgeon. He praises this amusement to the skies, and makes an immense show of giving you the result of your efforts afterwards, but, as a matter of fact, turns out about one in six for you, and keeps the rest to sell for live bait, or to have all ready for a party coming down to-morrow. Thus your pleasure and his profit are combined.

THE BANK ANGLER.

He generally wears, by way of a sporting costume, a frock coat very considerably indeed past its prime and a billy-cock hat.

His rod is as long as the mast of a schooner.

He slithers down the bank and crouches at the water's edge, presenting thus to you in the distance the apparition of a head without a body, coming out of the rushes. The idea is fairy-like, but its closer approach does not usually tend to keep up the illusion.

He provides himself with a box of oblong shape, in which he puts beer, bread and cheese, bait and tackle. The contents occasionally get mixed, but he does not seem to mind, and the gentles like it.

In the neighbourhood of London he selects, if possible, a spot contiguous to the outlet of a drain. There is no accounting for tastes.

He generally has a companion, from whom he keeps at a distance of about twenty yards all day. Conversation is carried on across this interval of space without reserve as *to subject or* choice of language.

His one great and only point of resemblance to the superior punt angler is that he rarely catches anything.

The Infant Angler.

I have some of these.

The infant angler is a perpetual terror.

He is always over-balancing himself and all but falling into the water.

He ought to fish from behind a palisade if his parents or guardians are to have any security; but, as a matter of fact, he prefers the edge of the steepest bank, or to lean with three-fourths of himself outside a punt, and the other fourth fidgeting inside.

He excels in complication of line.

He contrives firmly to plant his hook into apparently impossible places.

He walks with his rod in front, point downwards, and snaps the top joint.

He leaves the bait-can at home, which was the one thing he was solemnly charged to bring.

He upsets the box of worms in order to get one, and does not observe the circumstance until he finds the others all gone.

He toys with the landing-net until he drops it into the river.

He brings his tackle at intervals of ten minutes to get damage repaired.

When he strikes, the hook whizzes past in the immediate vicinity of the paternal eye.

He pays not the least attention to a real bite, but pulls up madly when his hook gets well hold of a weed.

He never touches a well-ordered tackle box except to leave behind a scene of indescribable confusion, and he uses up lines and hooks as if he eat them.

Concerning Tackle.

Tackle is aggravating.

It breaks. It gets twisted.

You either suffer it to become a confused heap, in which you dig at random, or you make so many neat little packets of it that you cannot remember any particular packet which contains any particular thing that you want, and your simplest need results in a display like the counter of a draper's shop when a troublesome customer has just departed.

Hooks in particular: they get mixed up with everything —flesh (not always your own mercifully), clothing, trees, weeds, each other.

They catch everything most readily except fish.

You wrestle with them, coax them, pull them, cut them out with scissors, but they go at it again and again with unabated vigour and perseverance.

The Writer of the above.

He must evidently be a soured and disappointed angler, who probably went out for a day's fishing one day at the end of last September in thin clothing, caught nothing, was nearly perished with the cold, and has since regarded anything piscatorial through the medium of blue nose, frozen toes, and wintry woes.

LUNCHEON BARS.

It falls to the lot of a great many individuals to be obliged to satisfy the mid-day cravings of hunger and thirst in the City of London every day of their lives, by the process of repairing to a stand-up luncheon bar, and taking a meal at the same. I am one of these wights, and I like it. I will endeavour to show why I like it, by recounting a few of my personal experiences and emotions.

First, there is room for the display of skill and dexterity. If any one who has had no practice in the art doubts this, let him try to eat any article of food, with a gravy sauce to it, in a stooping posture, garbed in an over-coat and hat, and with his plate on a level with his lowest waistcoat button. If I mistake not his hat will rise and fall upon his forehead at every munch, until it either rests upon his nose in front, or sticks out at right angles behind, supported only by a few inches of pericranium, according to the particular action of his jaws. Also he will, on many occasions, put into his mouth, fork *et præterea nihil*, by reason of a consignment of food not holding on while the journey from the counter is being traversed; and in that case the actual fate of the morsel will vary in different cases. It may roll down his coat on to his boot, and so to the floor. It may tumble back into the plate from a height, and splash gravy over

him. It may fall on to the counter, in which event he will probably roll his elbow along it, if he does not notice it or forgets its existence. And, again, there are many intermediate stages between total failure and complete success. Sometimes a piece of vegetable splits on the fork and crumbles viciously, one fragment ultimately arriving safely on a single prong, and the rest dispersing hurriedly in different directions. Or a spasmodic jerk from the gentleman next to you sends the fork as well as the mouthful half-way down your throat. Or the pewter pot so adjusts itself to the mouth, that when tilted up in the act of imbibing, some of its contents enter the expectant aperture, and the residue meanders in a rippling stream down the garments. Or the chunk of household bread is inadvertently placed in a beer pond, left on the counter by the gentleman who just went out. Or the right sleeve develops a tendency to dip into the mustard at intervals. These, and many other vicissitudes, befall those who do not study the whole operation as an accomplishment, worthy to take a place among the fine arts.

Secondly, the Christian virtues have many opportunities of coming out strongly. Thus, patience is needed, when in great haste or sinking with exhaustion, to wait quietly behind a solid phalanx of backs until a fragment of counter presents itself, and then, as you are stepping into that vacant spot, to see some one, who came four minutes after you did, slip into it before your nose. A calm and equable temperament can alone enable you to bear with composure the announcement that the only article on the bill of fare which you at all fancy is "off." A lovable disposition will *be needed,* if you are to smile sweetly when you are re-

quested every few minutes to "move a little lower down, please," in order that room may be made for some one eight or nine places off to squeeze in, insomuch that you keep slithering along the counter, clutching your plate and its appurtenances (but generally leaving your umbrella behind, and having to dig it out afterwards from between alien and unsympathetic legs), until you feel as if you were taking part in an uncomfortable sort of luncheon drill. A high moral sense must be possessed if, when you begin lunch, the bar is tolerably empty, so that you revel in unwonted elbow room, it then gradually fills up, and your arms become glued closer and closer to your side, until you are as one pinioned for execution, and access to your plate fades into a distant impossibilty. The old man (I am not referring to an individual) must be completely subdued before you can observe with philosophy that your mild requests for "Irish stew and boiled," or "two sausages on mashed," and your aspirations for bread, mustard, pepper, and other innocent and not unreasonable accompaniments of a meal fall on deaf ears, while the young gentleman next to you, with curly chestnut hair and blue eyes, and a collar like a circular hoarding, has every little wish anticipated, and is waited on as by a slave of the lamp.

And that leads me to my third reason—the attendants. These are, at my own and most other luncheon establishments, young ladies. Each has an allotted space of bar, designated usually by such artificial, and to the outsider, not obvious boundaries as a decanter or a sugar basin. If, in ignorance of the exact division, you happen to place yourself where the decanter or sugar basin is just opposite to a line drawn down your centre, each of two young ladies

will glare at you, and neither will pay the smallest attention to you on any consideration, until you discover your hideous mistake, and step one way or the other. Again, if you would secure any favourable notice for your requirements, you must always go to the same division, and the same young lady, though her division may at the moment be crammed, and all the others have yawning gaps in them. Neglect this rule—go to this or that part of the bar promiscuously—and you will become an object of hatred and contempt to every lady in the establishment, and be made to feel their displeasure, in the shape of stony deafness, cold potatoes, total inability to change a sovereign, and no salt.

All this is very nice, but it is not all. It is in the nature of things that these young ladies should have admirers, and that these latter should, for the most part, be composed of a species of youthful bar lounger, who is at the moment imagined by a confiding employer to be deeply engaged in a totally different pursuit. And so it is. Furthermore, it is natural that a young lady should think more of one, or (the luncheon bar maiden's heart being comprehensive) six or seven she loves, than of a person who is getting into years, who is obviously very much married, and has an eye only to filling an internal space, and not to the beauty and powers of conversation of the lady who ministers to his wants. So this is also. From these premises follow the inevitable inference that an individual falling within the latter class would be apt to be neglected. And so he is. But out of evil often comes good, and he has his compensation even in this. For it is not possible, however much *two people* may lean towards each other, to whisper across a

wide bar, in such wise as to exclude the penetration of sound to neighbouring ears, and the humble outsider is thus permitted to hear conversations sometimes more deep and mysterious, and, at the same time, more laden with profound meaning, than any that I have ever heard in any other circumstances, or read of in books; and at other times redolent of the most refined and pointed wit. I will give one faint specimen of each style.

CONVERSATION NO. 1.—THE MYSTERIOUS STYLE.

Gentleman (*whispering hoarsely over my shoulder, as the bar is crowded*)—"Seen him this morning?"

Lady—"No; 'e 'asn't been in yet."

Gentleman—"Was George there?"

Lady—"No; but G. M. was—you know."

Gentleman (*surprised*)—"Was he? I thought he was up there."

Lady—"No; 'e said Freddy was going to do it."

Gentleman—"I'll look in presently. Tell C., if he comes. Will you?"

Lady—"All right."

(*Gentleman melts from view.*)

CONVERSATION NO. 2.—THE FACETIOUS STYLE.

Gentleman (*jauntily placing right elbow on bar, hat on one side, collar fearful and wonderful*)—"Well, Miss M., how does it wag?"

Lady—"Oh; I've got a 'eadache this morning. What'll you 'ave? The mutton cutlets are very nice."

Gentleman—"All right, I'll try a cutton mutlet."

Lady—"Will you 'ave boiled or mashed with it?"

Gentleman—"Boiled, please. I'm too much of a masher myself to want them mashed."

Lady (*convulsed with laughter*)—"Go along with you; you're always talking nonsense."

(*Gentleman hums tune and balances fork on his finger while waiting for cutlet and boiled potatoes, and at intervals makes faces at lady, producing thereby renewed convulsions, which quite incapacitate her from attending to me. On arrival of the viands, gentleman takes up one of the potatoes on fork and inspects it with mock surprise.*)

Gentleman—"What do you call these?"

Lady—"Why, potatoes, of course."

Gentleman—"Oh! I beg pardon, I'm sure. I fancied they were boiled cannon balls."

(*And so on, only more so.*)

BREAKFAST IN BED.

I INDULGE in this festival about once a year. The occasion for my doing so is not referable usually to the fact of my being unwell, but rather to a condition of mental and moral flabbiness which overtakes me at long intervals and causes me to desire effeminate luxuries. The ceremony does not fit in with my ordinary habits, which are rather Spartan than otherwise—though I have never actually gone the length of smiling blandly while a wolf, concealed up my sleeve or elsewhere about my garments, has been making dinner off me. [I make no charge for throwing in this classical allusion, though I should not resist any little fee it might be thought to deserve.] I am particular to mention the rarity of the occurrence, because it may explain much that follows. If I did it oftener, I have no doubt I should get on better.

It is not practicable to take breakfast, otherwise than out of a feeding-bottle, in a horizontal position. Consequently there arises, first, a necessity for sitting up in bed. But sitting up in bed in the garb appropriate for lying down in bed would be very chilly indeed. Consequently there arises, secondly, a necessity for putting something over the shoulders. Here I meet my earliest difficulty. The something

which I put over my shoulders has ends to it, and they possess a remarkable aptitude, whenever I move, for dipping into my tea-cup, my mustard-pot, and anything in the shape of gravy that happens to be about.

Next, a table-land must be devised, whereon to rest the tray. For this purpose, I stretch my legs out rigidly, and subdue my knees to utter flatness. But my body objects to the arrangement, and the love of freedom steals over my limbs until it becomes an overmastering passion—whence it falls out, that the tray and its contents undergo a series of disturbances, with results of the most trying description. Thus, a slight drawing up of one knee will deposit a haddock in the middle of the marmalade; a defiant sneeze will send rivulets of tea over the buttered toast; an attempt to get my watch from under the pillow will propel a poached egg on to the counterpane, where it at once unpoaches; an involuntary slipping of the body down the bed, will cause the tray to appear suddenly at an angle of forty-five degrees, with all its contents huddled together at the lower end in wild confusion.

In order to get all the component parts of breakfast on to a tray, it is necessary to economise space, and pack them pretty closely. But when active operations begin, the various articles must of course be let loose. Of what use is a slop basin with the salt cellar inside, and yet where is the salt cellar to be put, when you want the slop basin? The rocky declivities of the bed afford no secure resting-place, and if you put anything outside the bed, you bring about untold complications when you stretch out for it, besides which, the great point is, that the breakfast must be *in* bed, *not dotted* about the room around it. This is another

trouble with me, because my breakfast tray is always packed on the portmanteau principle, and I am then left to do the best I can. I make no complaint, but it is hard to bear.

The circumstance of my remaining in bed for breakfast is regarded in various lights by my household. When I am clothed, and shaved, and booted, and spurred (I am obliged to say spurred, because it is the twin word to booted, but I will not swear to the spurs, except on Bank holidays), the inmates all tremble at my nod, but when I am thus helpless and unable to resent an insult, they take advantage of me. To my children the incident presents itself in a comic aspect. They are a little awed at first, and approaching my bed on tip-toe, they ask if I am ill. When I reply that I am not ill, they burst into uncontrollable mirth at my expense (there is not much in that, perhaps, because they do everything at my expense). They move parts of my breakfast where I cannot reach them, play at being the doctor and invite me to partake of bread pills, bring into my room all the toys which wind up with horrid sounds, make flying leaps on to the bed, and otherwise treat the occasion as a gala day devised for their special benefit, knowing perfectly well all the time that I am beneath a heap of dancing crockery, and cannot even speak aloud without knocking something over. The servants, on the other hand, resent my self-indulgence. They take up a position on a landing outside my room, where I can hear every word, and then remark to each other, that it is a wonder to them that people can't get up and have breakfast in proper time, like other people, and they wonder how much longer the work is going to be kept about, because

they can't do the room, and how people would like it themselves, if they were other people. Even the lady who has sworn to love, honour, and obey me, shows traces of latent irritation, which take the form of pulling up the blinds to the very top, and asking me, in a tone of laboured politeness, how soon I am likely to be getting up, because she rather wants the room, at the same time observing that it is a beautiful day out of doors, and expressing in icy tones a hope that I will stay in bed as long as I feel the need of resting, and will not mind its being a little inconvenient.

The great aim of breakfasting in bed is to remain there afterwards. I can no more do so than I can walk on my head. I am thoroughly and irredeemably awake. My nerves are strung up after my life and death struggle with the tray. Triangular crumbs from the feast insidiously work their way into the bed, and when I lie down they indent me all over in the most pointed manner. The sun comes streaming in to tell me that I am a slothful wretch. The bells keep ringing all over the house. My digestion is out of order, because when I eat in a semi-recumbent position, my food goes to the back of my neck, and there remains till further notice. My conscience is at work because I feel that I have departed from the paths of manliness and virtue. My limbs are stiff and uncomfortable by reason of the constrained position in which I have been trying to keep them. I feel as if I had not shaved or washed for a month. My watch keeps remarking in reproachful ticks that precious hours are flying. Somebody brings a note to which an answer is requested by the bearer, *and I have* to sit up in bed and write. Somebody else

brings a bill, and I have to get out of bed and withdraw money from the stocking which I keep up the chimney to pay it. From all which causes combined I am thoroughly out of temper—and speedily get thoroughly out of bed.

THE BURIAL OF JUMPS'S MOTHER.

I WAS walking away from my office one night, after a long day's work, and was just about to enter a Metropolitan Railway Station with intent to descend into the bowels of the earth and be carried along inside them towards my domestic hearth, when I was touched on the shoulder and a voice behind me made as nearly as I can recollect it the following observation in a tone which brought back indistinct memories of Hiawatha.

"Good evening sir you're not too proud I well do know to speak to one as often sold you froot in Fenchurch Street hoff is barrer and good you always found it I do 'ope and trust."

I am not a proud person. I believe that for a comparatively small consideration I would carry my washing home personally by way of Rotten Row without any great discomposure, and I vouch for my possessing a total indifference to appearances in general. But I never in the course of a long and varied experience of London life purchased fruit off a barrow—for the simple and sufficient reason that I have rather a sensitive interior, and that I have seen them polish it. Consequently I turned round upon the speaker to assure him that he had mistaken me for some one else. *When I did* so I beheld a young man of the costermonger

class with an open and ingenuous countenance, and showing many external indications of not being in easy circumstances.

"My good man," I said, "you have made some mistake. I never bought fruit from you in Fenchurch Street."

"You 'ave forgot it sir but well I knew your face as hup and down my barrer I 'ave wheeled in 'appy days gone by and bought from me you 'ave I do feel sure."

I did not think it necessary to resist the impeachment further, beyond again saying that the young man was certainly mistaken, and I made a move as if to pass on. But he got in front of me, not in a menacing way, but as one who desired anxiously to make a remark.

"I hask you to excuse me sir but if you would but tell me wot to do for I've my barrer 'ad to sell and 'ow to live I do not know."

Having experienced in early days a similar difficulty, though not arising from the sale of a barrow (in fact I was behind the young man there, because I had no barrow to sell), I felt a sympathetic chord in a bosom not generally inclined that way, and although I was late and tired and anxious to get home, I pulled up again and prepared to spend a few minutes patiently in conversation.

"Why did you have to sell your barrow?"

"My mother sir she died and prayed me not to let the Parish berry 'er and I said mother dear I will not if I 'ave to sell my hall and nothing helse I 'ad on hearth except my barrer so it went and with it went my honly means of livin' 'ard it is but true my name is 'Enery Jumps."

I could not help feeling much moved by this act of filial devotion on the part of Jumps, but having been long inured

to the wiles of metropolitan mendicancy, I felt that I must not be too confiding; moreover, I could not help acknowledging to myself that Jumps was very glib of speech, and I have not found glibness and genuine want associated closely as a rule. So I looked steadily at Jumps, and interrogated him in my best Charity Organization Society manner.

"When did your mother die?"

"Three months ago kind sir it was of fever."

"Where was she buried?"

"At West 'Am Simmintary on a Monday arternoon."

"How much did you pay the undertaker?"

"The figure sir was five pound ten and nine no more no less."

"Have you got his bill?"

"No sir I 'ave not 'ere but if my word will not be took for all I say is troo as gospel words the bill I 'ave at 'ome and show it can and will."

A hurt expression was visible on the face of Jumps, and I felt that I had pursued my inquiries to rather brutal extremes, so I asked him more gently where he lived, and said that perhaps I would write to him. He gave me an address at the East End, of which I made a note, and then I suddenly bethought me to come straight to the point.

"What do you want to do, my man?"

"Oh! hif a barrer I could wheel again and 'ave just one day's start in froot 'ow 'appy and contented I should be dear sir."

"How much would it take to set you up in that way?"

"For three pounds ten I could a barrer buy as would last all my life with mendin' now and then and fruit five *shillings sir* I should call blessins hon your 'ed if you

could 'elp me to a barrer so that I could honest hearn my bread and manly by my daily toil."

I reflected a minute, while Jumps cast most affecting and piteous looks at me, and then I gave him my card and told him to come to me on the following afternoon and bring the undertaker's bill with him, and that I would then see what could be done.

Jumps invoked blessings on my head to an extent which was rather embarrassing in the passage of a railway station. I may also mention parenthetically that they have not since been verified, and resemble in that respect the fortune told me at a bazaar for half a crown, which mixed up my future in a mysterious manner with a young lady in black, who was to arrive from across the sea on the following day, and exercise a most powerful influence over my future.

But Jumps evidently felt at the same time that life was uncertain, and also recollected the superior advantages of the proverbial bird in the hand.

"Oh! sir joy is mine too great for words but food I 'ave not touched for days and hif a small sum you'd most kindly lend to 'ire a barrer with and buy a little froot to sell ter-morrer in the mornin' beg for worlds I would not no sir no but honly means to work."

I was and am conscious of the extreme weakness of the proceeding, but I have to confess that I lent Jumps five shillings to go on with, and departed under another pyrotechnic shower of benedictions with considerable doubts in my own mind as to whether Jumps had not been too much for me—five shillings too much.

The further I got away from the glamour of Jumps's persuasive presence and poetic imagery, the less I believed in

him as a man and brother. But the deed was done—my five shillings were past recall, and so I resolved to forget the incident and wait to see whether he would turn up on the following day, with the vouchers for his mother's interment at West Ham Cemetery as evidence of his veracity.

He came sure enough with a charming air of simplicity and proud innocence upon him, and a receipted bill for the exact sum of £5, 10s. 9d., paid to one Peter Lobbles for performing the melancholy office of interring Mrs. Jumps. I really felt ashamed of having doubted Jumps, and was much disposed to atone for it by supplying the funds for the barrow on the spot. And if the truth must be told, I think I should have done so, if I had not determined to allow some of my friends the privilege of contributing to a fund for starting Jumps afresh in life if he should prove to be a deserving object—in fact to get up a sort of "friendly lead" on his account. I therefore again put him off, and this time for a week, at the expiration of which time I promised to write and let him know finally whether I would do anything for him. The delay was naturally rather damping to him, and as he declared to me with a large tear in each eye, so carried away had he been with the prospect of getting a new barrow, that instead of hiring one with my five shillings he had paid it as a deposit towards the purchase of a new one, and was consequently again penniless. A half-crown terminated the interview.

During the next few days I made known the case of Jumps to several friends and procured liberal promises of assistance. The circumstance of the production of the *burial bill* convinced the most sceptical, as it had entirely

set at rest all my own doubts. I felt that I was being instrumental in setting a good son and deserving man on his legs, and my bosom swelled in consequence almost inconveniently.

It happened that on the day before I had promised to write to Jumps, and after I had anxiously turned over in my mind several plans for Jumps, I had occasion to go to the East End of London in the evening. I resolved to walk, and was making my way along the Mile End Road when it suddenly occurred to me that Jumps resided in those parts and had given me an address. I felt in my pocket and found the note that I had taken of it, and I was moved by a sudden impulse to inspect the spot on which his domestic virtues had been so conspicuously displayed if it were anywhere within reach. Conversation with a friendly policeman appeared to show that the place was not at all far off, but on the other hand not easy to find, and as the policeman hinted not a very nice spot when you got there. It involved turning to the left out of the Mile End Road, and then, to the best of my recollection, taking the second to the right, and then the third to the left, and then going along a flagged passage, and then taking the third to the right, and then skirting a churchyard, and then taking the second to the left again. The policeman brought it all out as if it were a bit of a play in which he had been acting during a long run, but I found it difficult to carry in my head, and still more difficult to follow geographically. Howbeit, after falling over many things, and smelling many odours, and going up numerous blind alleys, and asking my way of every other man, woman, and child that I met, I reached the promised land, and saw "Cooper's Rents,"

inscribed over a low archway which led into a squalid and most unsavoury court.

I don't know whether Cooper still lives, and if so what his emotions may be when he enters his Rents. Possibly he is not particular to a shade. Or possibly, again, the joy of collecting weekly that which the name implies may render Cooper indifferent to external surroundings. Possibly once more Cooper may have neither a high look nor a proud stomach, or at all events only the former. Anyhow, I am quite unable to congratulate Cooper from any possible point of view except the most sordid, for a more tumble-down, dilapidated, dirty, garbage-abounding, smelliferous nook, it never was my lot to enter and heartily wish myself out of.

It was summer time, and Cooper's Rents was not so much inhabited as swarming. Adults were looking out of windows, sitting on doorsteps, leaning back against walls. Those of the children who were old enough were dancing (yes, dancing in that place—God help them, poor little mites—the saddest merry sight I ever saw!), and those who were not old enough to dance were promiscuously rolling about wherever there was room to do it. Whatever life there may have been indoors, not leaning out of a window, it was not human life—perhaps it was rats.

My appearance was naturally the subject of some wonderment. The grown-up people surveyed me with varying degrees of curiosity, and the eyes of a few of them seemed to rest with some affection upon my watch-chain. The juveniles all ceased from sport, and came round me as if I were a Punch and Judy show. I began to regret the impulse to which I had foolishly yielded, and to wish Henry

Jumps and his past and prospective barrows in Jamaica. But there was no getting out of it now.

I am generally regarded with awe, and I have noticed that my look has peculiarly quelling properties; but Cooper's Rents had evidently not lived up to a majestic style like mine. A remark having pointed reference to my hat, made by a little urchin about ten years old, produced shouts of juvenile laughter, and when I lifted up my hand to command silence, the gesture was regarded as exquisitely comic, and Cooper's substitute for a welkin rang again. At length when I felt so very uncomfortable that I really had a mind to take to my heels and run, a voice from one of the doorsteps roared out in a terrific bass—

"'Old yer row, will yer, and let 'im speak."

This interruption in my favour had the desired effect of quieting the children, and, looking gratefully in the direction from which it came, I saw a gigantic costermonger leaning against a corner of a doorway and stolidly smoking a short black pipe.

I advanced to this personage and asked if he could kindly tell me in which house Henry Jumps lived.

"Jumps?" he said interrogatively.

"Jumps," I replied affirmatively.

He pondered for a few moments and aided his reflections by thoughtfully scratching his head with the mouthpiece of his pipe, which he removed from his lips for the purpose.

"Jumps?" he at length asked again.

"Jumps," I replied again.

"Now look 'ere," he continued, looking hard at me and speaking very deliberately, "his it straight?"

I was not quite sure for the moment whether he invited an opinion on the parting of his hair, but I soon divined that the expression was figurative.

"Quite straight," I answered; "I want to do him good, not harm."

"If I thought that yer wos a bloomin' deteck*tive* I'd knock yer bloomin' 'ed orf yer bloomin' body."

"But I assure you I am nothing of the kind," I answered. I spoke quite rapidly—not, you must understand, because I was at all afraid, certainly not—but because I could not rest under the imputation for a moment.

"Well, then, ring the fourth bloomin' bell of this 'ere bloomin' door."

He made a lazy movement away from the corner at which he had been standing, and the disappearance of his body revealed to view a succession of little bell handles. I pulled No. 4, and a moment afterwards a shrill treble voice screamed out from a top window.

"Don't want none to-day."

Now I perceived hereupon that my costermonger patron began to shake in a manner suggestive of internal mirth, some way down, and at length a smile got to the top and travelled over his heavy features.

I looked at him inquiringly.

"She takes yer for the bloomin' cat's meat, blowed if she don't!" he remarked.

I rang the bell again, and the same voice called out in a tone of greater asperity, "Don't want none, I tell yer."

I felt quite helpless. To call up to the top of a house that I was not the cat's meat was a ridiculous degradation *to which I* could never submit. But I was soon relieved

from the dilemma. My costermonger again brought his powerful bass into operation and yelled upwards.

"Tain't cat's meat, yer bloomin' old fool. It's a swell askin' for 'Enery."

An answer that I did not catch was hastily mumbled, and then, while I wondered who this lady could be, I heard heavy thumps descending the stairs, and finally a very stout middle-aged female appeared in view. She had a cotton dress on. It is not for me to say that it was practically the only garment she deigned to wear on a hot summer evening, but though I don't say so, upon my honour I think it was. The new arrival had rather a fresh and jolly countenance, though she looked, too, quite equal to asserting herself on proper occasions, and I no sooner cast eyes on her than I recognised a striking resemblance to Henry Jumps. But yet his poor mother was dead, and this person was much too old to be his wife or sister. Why not his aunt then? Ah! most likely that was it.

"Wos you a wantin' my 'Enery?"

My 'Enery! the possessive pronoun sounded odd for a more or less distant relative. But if she lived with him, mended his clothes (occasionally), washed for him (sometimes), was it not natural that she should come to regard him in that sort of light? Yes, certainly it was.

"Yes, ma'am, I was. He gave me his address, and as I was not far from here I just came to see if I could find him at home."

I could not help noticing that the lady looked significantly at my patron, the costermonger. Neither could I avoid observing that he nodded slightly, and that his doing so appeared to take rather a weight off her mind. She

turned to me briskly, and with a choice of words and stopless utterance which again recalled Henry Jumps most forcibly remarked—

"Me and my 'Enery live in the second pair front it's but a garrit but our honly 'ome it is and if you'll henter it kind sir we shall be proud 'e is not 'ome but very soon will be the stairs is dark and many broke."

I did not feel at all moved to avail myself of this pressing invitation. I had on the contrary a strong desire to get out of Cooper's Rents as soon as I possibly could, and then examine my pockets to see what had been taken and what (if anything) had been left. But although this anxiety was powerfully upon me, and was quite sufficient to prevent my going upstairs to the apartment of Jumps, I felt that I could not rush off without holding a little further parley with the female relative, and moreover she inspired me with a curiosity which I was fain to satisfy.

"Thank you very much," I said in my sweetest tones, "I shall be very glad to go upstairs some other time, but I am rather in a hurry this evening, and I fear I cannot wait. Henry seems to be a very hard-working, deserving young man."

I thought I might be mistaken, but it certainly did appear to me that my remark caused the big costermonger a certain amount of suppressed mirth, and I felt sure that he fairly grinned when the lady cast her eyes upwards and replied—

"A 'arder working better boy does not live 'e is the happle of my widdered heye."

A widow. This disposed then of any ridiculous idea of *Jumps having* taken to himself so elderly a bride.

"Have you and Henry kept house together long?"

"Would 'e desert me never not for worlds 'e is my staff and propper hup."

I was glad to hear this about Jumps, because it served to confirm my favourable opinion of him, and to show that I had not troubled myself in vain; but I did not seem to get any nearer to the point I was aiming at by indirect means, so I resolved to go straight to it.

"He is your nephew, I suppose?"

"My wot?"

"Your nephew."

"My nevvy?"

"Yes, your nephew!"

"Nevvy indeed! wot should 'e be but my hown boy as hever his and better could not be."

"You don't mean to say," I replied faintly, "that you're his mother."

Mrs. Jumps did not like this, and her countenance showed that her ire was roused. She bridled.

"Don't I though," she said angrily, "and may a person ask why not if no offence to them as knows better than other people about their own children as they've borne and bred?"

I was so taken aback that I quite lost my presence of mind.

"But you were buried for five pound ten and nine."

I really think that Mrs. Jumps was justified in being annoyed by this senseless and irritating observation. Anyhow she most unmistakably was. She bridled a good deal more, and placed her arms akimbo in a warlike manner.

"Berried *ham* I? Ho hindeed! Perraps you saw my

copse and followed it to the semintery and dug the grave as I wos put in. Look 'ere my gentleman if you think as you can come to Cooper's Rents and make fun of a poor widder woman you're jest jolly well mistooked and my 'Enery will spile your beauty for you and if Poker was a man instead of a 'ulkin lump 'e'd do it now."

This closing reference to Poker was applied to the costermonger, who had laughed in silent heaves all through the conversation. At this direct appeal he turned towards Mrs. Jumps contemptuously before I could withdraw the obnoxious words and growled out—

"'Old yer stoopid tongue, can't yer. 'E ain't making no fun, 'e aint. 'Enery's been a gammonin' of 'im beautiful, and you've been and spiled it, that's wot you've done—'asn't she, 'Enery?"

My back had been turned towards the entrance of Cooper's Rents, and Mr. Henry Jumps had arrived unobserved by me at this critical juncture, as I discovered on turning sharply round.

He looked very much surprised on seeing me there. He also looked very much annoyed and injured; much as I have seen an angler look who, after playing a big fish skilfully for a long time and bringing it right up to the bank, breaks his tackle and loses his fish. He regarded me much as if I were the fish in the act of wagging my tail and going off. "'Enery," went on Poker with sardonic humour, "you've been and berried yer poor mother and she's a come to life agin."

I regret to say that Henry Jumps showed no trace whatever of shame or repentance. He did not even attempt to assume for my edification the mellifluous style of language which had distinguished him at our previous interviews.

He told me in effect (I purposely refrain from repeating the exact expressions) that I had no business there; that I had come as a spy; that he supposed I had an ardent desire for his immediate incarceration; that if I had it would not be gratified, because it was his intention there and then to obscure my vision, to lacerate my mouth, to flatten my nose, and ultimately to knock my disfigured head off. He then, to the obvious pride and with the active encouragement of his fond mother (who ought to have been lying quietly in her tomb for five pound ten and nine), proceeded to take a greasy cap off and throw it on the pavement, and then to put himself into a fighting attitude; at which spectacle the entire populace of Cooper's Rents instinctively smelt blood and gathered round in a compact semicircle.

I felt most uncomfortable. Even assuming that a personal combat with Jumps were to result in a glorious victory (which at my time of life was problematical), it was certain that I should issue from it with facial damages such as would render a close companionship with raw beef steak and a total inability to be seen outside my front door for a fortnight a moral certainty. This was the most favourable view of the matter. The reverse side was that I might be set upon all round, overpowered, robbed, possibly even cut up and sold as pork sausages.

All this passed through my mind in a few moments while Jumps was waving his arms in the immediate vicinity of my nose and getting up steam.

And then Poker rose most nobly to the occasion. Placing his immense form between me and Jumps he observed to that personage laconically, but in a voice like unto the roar of the lion—

"Stow it."

Jumps was so eager for my blood that he seemed disposed to brave Poker. He inquired who Poker was, though I have every reason to believe that he did not really need the information. He then tried to get round Poker to me. Whereupon Poker took hold of him with one hand and propped him up against the wall, and held him there as if he had been a toy soldier who was rather weak in the legs.

"You try to touch 'im," said Poker grimly, "and I'll break every bloomin' bone in yer bloomin' body."

Jumps evidently knew Poker's little ways sufficiently well to realise that there was no getting over this interruption to his plans for my benefit. He muttered sulkily, but when Poker gradually let go his hold he made no further attempt to assail me, and with a savage glance at me melted into the house with his mother. As the crowd, disappointed of their promised sport, broke up their ranks, Poker turned towards me and made what for him was quite a long speech.

"Get out of this 'ere bloomin' place as quick as yer can, and don't come 'ere after no bloomin' berried people no more, else you'll find it werry horkard. I don't b'lieve as you meant no 'arm or you'd 'ave found it werry horkard to-night."

I thanked Poker heartily, and forced some silver on him. I really mean forced, for he was most reluctant to take it, and seemed to regard it as having some undefined connection with blood money. I was just moving off when he called out after me—

"Mind no settin' the blues on 'Enery Jumps. You come 'ere straight and you're a goin' away straight and no bloomin' *splittin'*."

I assured him that I was going away straight and that Henry Jumps was quite safe as far as I was concerned.

So Henry Jumps did not call on me next day. And the subscriptions collected for him were returned in rather a sheepish manner to the donors. And I have every reason to believe that Henry Jumps was identical with a person who was not long afterwards convicted for obtaining money by false pretences, and who was described at the trial as one of the most expert and frequently convicted gentlemen engaged in that particular line of business.

MY MORNING WALK.

If my morning walk were taken in country lanes or fields, I should only have a few commonplace remarks to offer about the scent of the flowers and the song of the birds, and it is just possible that for the first time in my life I might come under a faint suspicion of borrowing what somebody else had said before. But it isn't. It begins with a few quiet streets and squares, and then breaks out into Oxford Street, Holborn, Newgate Street, Cheapside, Cornhill, and at length I reach, in Leadenhall Street, an establishment wherein I remain daily for a great many more hours than is at all compatible with my personal notions of active enjoyment.

I am not a dust-bin. I mention the circumstance because a great many people think I am. I do not hope to carry conviction to them, but I should not like the idea to gain ground. Even these persons do not, in so many words, accuse me of being a receptacle for domestic superfluities, but they treat me strictly on that footing. I will now proceed to show the connection between this subject and my morning walk.

I start at an hour when a housemaid stands at the front door of nearly every private mansion and shakes the dust *out of* mats at the passer-by. I am the passer-by, and I

receive the contents of each mat. This lasts until I reach Oxford Street. From there till the end of my journey my triumphant progress is marked by a succession of incidents somewhat similar in kind, but much more varied in degree and character. In the first place, I become more important. Instead of the modest tributary offerings of a private door-mat, I am permitted to receive the active refuse of a shop when it is in the full swing of being cleaned out. There is no half-hearted generosity about it: I get the lot. Then again there is a marked diversity in the mode of cleaning out shops which relieves my passive part in the operation of all monotony, and is very different to the mechanical mat-shaking of the languid housemaid. The following are only a few types which I select as illustrations at random:—

1. The Ferocious Shopman.—This man takes my unassuming desire to pass his employer's premises on the public pavement as a personal injury. He arranges a complication of pails and watering-pots and brooms, and my appearance is the signal for bringing into play whatever is nearest to me. If I am not watered upon like a geranium, I receive the full contents of a broom, or I am made to trip up over a pail. My doing so in a spirit of cheerful submission does not mollify this person; but, on the contrary, is regarded as a fitting subject of scornful remark, sometimes exceeding parliamentary licence.

2. The Facetious Shopboy.—This youth does not regard me with hatred, but as a subject of harmless amusement. He accumulates with his broom little stores of dust and garbage, and at the instant of my passing he begins to sweep in my direction with a sustained energy which he would display on no other provocation whatsoever. If I

remonstrate with him, he dances round me in unaffected glee, and any threat of subjecting him to personal chastisement is generally met by his producing from out of a pail of water a fearful and wonderful sort of elongated squirt, designed for cleaning the shop windows, but capable of playing on any part of my person at the shortest notice. He is of a most cheerful disposition, but his spirits carry him away a little at times.

3. The Stupid Shopboy.—This person really means well, but his limited capacity prevents him from giving effect to his good intentions. He has a confused sort of half-formed desire to avoid me, but his movements in that direction take the form of getting his broom inextricably mixed up with my legs, or bringing the handle into violent contact with my ribs, or upsetting the watering-pot over my feet, or sending a shower of dust into my eyes, all this being done under the innocent impression that I am not where I am, or that I shall not be there by the time his consignment is delivered. When he sees the result of his proceedings he looks at me as if an apology were struggling somewhere inside him, but it never arrives while I am in sight or hearing.

The Painfully Courteous Shopman.—This is a very rare species, and in particular is seldom found in Northern latitudes, but I have met him. He moves everything out of my way, stops his broom, shrinks back into the doorway, and wishes me obsequiously good-morning. And if by any accident he does land a speck of dust on me his prostration of remorse is heartrending. I thought at first that there lurked under this a suspicion of mockery. I afterwards *put it down* to a singularly perfect Christian character. I

ultimately had reason to believe that it was traceable to a desire to quaff bitter beer at my expense.

I do not wish to exaggerate—it is not my nature *to*—but I am not, perhaps, going too far in saying that after this preliminary skirmish with door-mats, followed by some two miles odd of shop cleaning, I am apt to reach my journey's end in a condition more nearly resembling that of a well-filled parochial dust-cart than a professsional gentleman with a character to maintain. But I have a few odd matters to throw in yet before the picture of my personal appearance can be regarded as in anywise complete. The British workman is much given to expectoration. The gentleman who rides outside an omnibus and smokes like a funnel all the way is also liberal in his views of salivation. Each alike cultivates distant shots, and is indifferent as to intermediate obstacles. I say no more. Again, the shopman likes in summer time to keep his shop cool, and with that laudable object, pulls down outside blinds supported by projecting iron rods. The iron rods are generally on a level with my hat. If I have a new hat on, they are always level with it. I have, therefore, either to break my hat, or to butt my head at intervals. Naturally I prefer to butt my head—when I remember to do so. I forgot it once this morning, and am consequently open to any reasonable offer for a ventilated best quality Lincoln and Bennett twenty-four shilling silk gossamer, which I purchased last week. Any gentleman of the legal profession who bids more than an outsider will have the preference.

TRYING FOR AN APPOINTMENT.

IT happened some time ago that a certain appointment fell vacant and that I tried to get it. It also happened very oddly that I did not get it. It furthermore happened that I recorded a vow that on no provocation, in no conceivable circumstances, at no time or place, alive or dead, waking or sleeping, sane or imbecile, would I ever try for another. And up to the present moment it is a fact that I never have, not even when the beadle of my parish lately retired on a modest competence, and a deputation, headed by the Prime Minister, implored me to allow myself to be nominated against a local chimney sweep and a cat's-meat man.

Nevertheless, when I look back on that episode in my distinguished career, I cannot but recall many pleasurable incidents which, for the encouragement of others, I must not allow to sink into oblivion.

In the first place it gave me an opportunity, when I applied for the appointment, of writing my own biography, from the extremely desirable point of view of saying everything that redounded to my glory, and leaving out everything that had an opposite tendency. For instance, I made much of my many achievements (for full particulars see advertisement sheet), but I did not think it necessary to refer to the circumstance that I had undergone several

terms of imprisonment for robbery with violence. When I saw in print what a wonderful man I was, if you looked at me only on one side, my bosom swelled with pride, and I can truthfully say that my bosom never did that before except on one occasion, at an evening party, when I was mistaken for a waiter.

Then came the testimonial stage—and if I thought a good deal of myself before, I figured as a paragon of perfection then, and no mistake. The worthies in whose gift the appointment lay were informed, with a lavish profusion of adjectives, that as a schoolboy I had been a model; as a student I had given the most extraordinary foretaste of great things to come; as a man I had more than fulfilled the promise of my youth, and was indeed a stunner (twelve-stunner as a dry matter of fact, but that is neither here nor there). And the most gratifying thing about these documents was that they were all quite true, and that several of the gentlemen who wrote them had evidently been watching my career with a closeness which I had not even suspected. Of course they had my own application before them, and it may have given a little assistance to their memories. One friend, for instance, I remember, followed that document pretty closely. Where I had said that in the year so and so I had done so and so, he said, "in the year so and so, you did so and so." But then he must have known it, of course, and this was merely a curious similarity in the mode of expression. In one thing every testimonial agreed with its brethren—to wit, that of all the persons who could be found on this or any other globe to fill the vacant appointment, there was only one real original unmistakable out-and-out fit and proper person—which person was this

present writer, and none other. I was never tired of reading that to my wife, and she said she liked hearing it. I noticed that she displayed most enthusiasm when she wanted to buy something; but I can furnish no explanation of the connection between the two things, and, indeed, I think it must have been merely accidental.

Third stage.—Getting at them: a most delightful process for a very busy man. I first had to get a list of the magnates who held my fate in their hands; then to have many copies made of the same; and then to bring influence to bear. A most circuitous business this. The goal to be reached was that some one should personally convey to each of these gentlemen what a wonderful fellow I was, on the supposition that he had in all probability put my application and testimonials in his rubbish basket, alongside a prospectus and a baby-linen advertisement. But the medium for making this communication was only to be found by attacking with that list every one I knew, every one whom every one I knew knew, every one whom every one I knew thought he knew some one else who might know, every one who was mentioned to me by some one I knew as not being known to him but whom he knew had some connection with some one else whom some one else that he knew might possibly be able to influence through his wife's first cousin, every one that at first, second, third, fourth, fiftieth hand could by any possibility beat my personal drum in the drum of the ear of one of those men on that awful list. The forces which I marshalled ranged from a retired major-general living in Wales, whose name I had never heard before, to a lady whom I had madly loved in early life, but who, from causes needless to *mention,* had married another.

Fourth stage.—A sickening interval of feverish suspense. Eating, drinking, sleeping, thinking, walking, talking the appointment night and day.

Fifth stage.—Informed that I was one of a selected five, and requested to attend at a certain building on a certain day and see the Jupiter Olympuses.

Sixth stage.—The interval between this intimation and the appearance on the momentous occasion spent in alternations of buoyant hope and blank despair, in rehearsals of my personal appearance, demeanour, and remarks on the occasion. Also in vindictive hatred of the other selected ones.

Seventh stage.—I went to the interview. I was ushered solemnly through a succession of passages and rooms, and ultimately reached the Presence Chamber, and was motioned to a chair. As I advanced to it I experienced a feeling that one of my legs had grown longer than the other, and that I was in consequence not walking at all as I had intended. On coming to an anchor, I was about to assume an expression of countenance in which deep thought, profound ability, latent humour, and sweetness of disposition would be combined in a manner peculiarly my own, when a large fly settled on my nose. I have always had a little tendency to a cast in one eye at times, and as the fly was most plainly visible to me throughout the interview (a horrid fascination prevented me from removing it), I infer that I must have inclined that way on this occasion. The thought occurred to me at the time and disturbed my composure sadly; but the more I tried not to do it the more oblique did the vision of that eye become, until I felt as if I could see with it all round my head and back to the starting-point.

I had framed my observations upon the supposition that I should be asked certain things, but as I was not asked those things at all, but totally different things, I did not derive much assistance from my laboured preparation for the interview. On the contrary, my own oration kept coming up to the surface and getting in the way. When I was asked whether, if elected, I should be able to make the duties of the office my first consideration, I replied to the best of my belief that my birthday was on the 12th of April. When inquiry was made as to the opportunities which I had had of gaining experience in particular classes of business, I answered that I had been delicate when young, but was now quite strong. When some particulars were asked as to the appointments which I already held, I replied that my eldest boy was twelve years old. Such at least were the general impressions which I carried away. The majesty of my exit was detracted from by the circumstance that my legs still retained a hop-and-go-one species of movement, and that I went to the wrong door and was ignominiously led back to the right one.

Eighth stage.—Another period of sickening suspense, relieved by periodical discoveries that sources of interest which I had not thought of would have been available to me if I had thought of them before, that I had left a most important point out of my application, and that I had failed to create an impression commensurate with my real merits at the eventful interview.

Ninth stage.—Letter announcing that Jones had got the appointment and returning my testimonials. Blue fire for Jones. Blue devils for me. Curtain for both.

MY HAIRCUTTER.

SOME males (I know nothing of the habits of females in such matters) appear to me to have their hair cut about every other day, judging from the fact that they never exhibit any vegetation exceeding one inch in length. My own average is about once in six weeks, and I present successively in the interval every stage of personal beauty from a close cropped convict to an Italian bandit. This is not because I love variety, nor is it because I cannot afford to pay sixpence at a pinch, but it is due to the fact that I can find time to attend to everybody's affairs but my own, and put off this little luxury until some spasmodic opportunity enables me to make a rush for it.

I am not popular with my hairdresser. When I enter his shop staggering under a guilty load of hair, he looks at me in a supercilious manner, by which he conveys to me with painful clearness that he thinks I have saved it all up until I could insure a tremendous sixpennyworth for my money. He knows that I do not systematically keep it always long, and so only look in to have little bits taken off, which would be as profitable as if I kept it always short. He is, on the contrary, well aware that when one of his myrmidons (the rawest 'prentice hand is always put to practise on me as if I were a hospital patient) swathes me in a

ridiculous garment partaking equally of the properties of a surplice and a housemaid's gown, and breathes in my ear the remark, "Much hoff, sir," I shall infallibly respond, "Plenty, please." He is aware that my visits are few and far between, that I seldom have my hat ironed for sixpence, or visit the experienced chiropodist or the accomplished dentist, who are referred to in large letters on the walls as being on the premises much in the same manner as if they were special attractions at a fair, to be viewed for extra payment. Likewise has experience taught him that I do not patronise his infallible hair tonic, his Arabian scent, his exhilarating dentifrice, or his electric brushes. How then can I expect him to love me? I do not, though I would rather he did if it were quite the same to him, because it is pleasant to be loved by a hairdresser.

The man who cuts my hair likes me better than his master does because, when all is over, I give him twopence for himself, but I sadly fear that I try him a good deal, and I know for certain that he is a sore affliction to me.

When I sit down swathed as aforesaid, and he has ascertained my wishes as to quantity, also as aforesaid, he sets to work. I could forgive him for twisting and turning my head as if it had no natural affinity to my neck, but I cannot avoid a shudder when he removes small fragments of loose hair by blowing at me as if I were a hot piece of pudding. He likes onions, and I do not sympathise with the taste.

The conversation of this worthy ranges over weather, politics, hair, theatres, hair again, police intelligence, hair again, his life and adventures, hair again, the chiropodist *upstairs*, hair again, the properties of the exhilarating denti-

frice—winding up with a peroration of hair. My recollection of his remarks at our last interview, which took place quite five weeks ago (my locks rest on my shoulders as I write) is as follows :—

"Very dull to-day, sir, ain't it? I see the papers says it means snow, but there, 'ow can any one tell. They must write something, sir, mustn't they, as I always says. Think the Government will go out, sir? There was a gent in yesterday morning, and 'e told me they was sure to be beat over this 'ere Irish question. I don't know nothing about it myself, but I don't seem to think them Parnell chaps ought to 'ave 'Ome Rule, as a gent who was in the other day says, what would they do with it if they 'ad it, except shoot each other in the back when they wasn't looking, instead of doing it to farmers and cattle. (*Confidential whisper close to my ear.*) Gettin' very thin at the top, sir, what do you use for it? Nothing but soap and water! (*Goes to a table and returns with a bottle of densely coloured liquid of the intrinsic value of three-halfpence—price* 10*s.* 6*d.*) Ever try this, sir? Fine thing for the 'air; gets at the roots, and brings it up wonderful. Try it, sir? Don't care about it, sir? Thank you, sir. Seen Drury Lane Pantomime, sir? I 'aven't been myself, but a gent who was in last week says it's the best they've ever 'ad, and money comin' in like water. I prefers the 'eavy drayma myself; but of course it's just what your opinion 'appens to be. You'd find that 'air tonic would bring all the 'air back on this place in no time, sir. Best not to use water, sir,—makes the 'air so dry; much better try a little lotion. We 'ave some Hay One lotion, sir. You can 'ave a large bottle or small, and it'll last you a long time. I'll put

a little on now, sir, and you'll see 'ow pleasant it is to the 'air. Rather not, sir? Very well, sir—thank you, sir. Strange case that at the Clerkenwell Police Court, sir, yesterday? I can't 'elp thinking 'e done it; but a gent as was in just now says, 'e thinks they've got the wrong man. I don't say they 'aven't, but it looks very queer to me. If you was to leave off partin' it in the middle for a bit, sir, and use a little tonic for the top of the 'ead, you'd 'ave a beautiful 'ead of 'air I'll guarantee in six weeks. It's only got thin there for want of a little care and not using anythin'. No time to think about it? No, sir?—Quite so, sir. Thank you, sir. Wasn't always at this, sir, and 'ope I shan't always stay at it. My father put me into trade; but I didn't get on some'ow, and I went abroad; but I didn't get on there, and come back again, and 'ere I am; but it don't suit me. Hours too long, sir, and pay too short for me. Like it singed to-day, sir? Strengthens the 'air wonderful, and don't take a minute. Don't seem to care about it? Very well, sir—No, sir—thank you, sir. Started a corn doctor upstairs, sir. Very clever, sir, they say. Gent in 'ere last Tuesday told me as 'e thought 'im the best e'd ever seen at it, and 'ad eased 'is feet wonderful. Comes from Russia, sir. Father's a Count, I've 'eard say, as got into trouble there with the Government, though I don't know as it's true or not: you 'ear so many things, don't you, sir. Shall I sponge it with Bay Rum, sir—only sixpence extra? Makes the 'air very soft and nice, and does it a lot of good. Afraid of smellin' of it afterwards? Well, it do smell a little, but it soon goes off, sir, and it ain't anything not to notice more perticler if I put a little lotion *on afterwards*. Not to-day, sir?—Thank you, sir. Tried

our guvnor's dentifrice, sir? It's surprisin' good for the teeth. Show you a box, sir? You'd rather not take it now?—We'll send it, sir, with pleasure. Prefer not? Yes, sir—very good, sir. This is your 'at, I think, sir, ain't it? —'low me to brush it, sir. Your coat, sir. Thank you, sir. You really ought to see to your 'air, sir. Great pity to lose it, sir. It don't come again if you let it go too far. Much better try a bottle of tonic, sir. Certain result. Smallest size bottle, sir—just to try it, and I'll wager you go on with it. You won't, sir? Good day, sir. THANK YOU, SIR. (The capitals represent a spasm of gratitude on receiving twopence from me at parting.)

One more process—to pay my sixpence. I do so, and leave under an imputation, scornfully echoed down the shop, and chronicled by a contemptuous signal on a bell, that I have represented to that establishment "Cuttin' only." No hat ironed. No corns cuts. No teeth stopped. No singeing. No bay-rumming. No dentifrice. No lotion. No tonic. Not so much as a tooth brush. Cuttin' only.

FAT AND LEAN.

I WAS originally a very thin young man, so much so, that when I walked out with my one-and-sixpenny malacca cane, it might have been an open question to a near-sighted person some way off which was malacca cane, and which was me. If anybody had suggested to me, when I was twenty years old, that I should ever present to the public gaze the protuberances of which I afterwards became the sole and responsible lessee and manager, I should have ridiculed the idea—being at that time, I may mention, rather an elegant figure of a man than otherwise, and proud of the manner in which my back went in.

Don't imagine that I submitted tamely. On the contrary, I wrestled with the enemy most vigorously. When I first felt a faint suspicion that *they* were getting a little tight round the waist, I took the alarm at once. Said I to myself, said I, this will not do at any price. So away went butter (I am very fond of butter), and jam (I love jam), and tarts (I adore tarts), as a preliminary sacrifice to the gods. I think it was checked for about a month, and then they began to get tighter again. I looked round me for a *fresh* sacrifice, and lighted on potatoes. I embraced my

last potato fondly—in fact, I mashed it, if I may be allowed the most coarse and hideous joke of the Music Hall species ever perpetrated—and started again.

But I gained no more (except in weight) by abandoning potatoes, than I had from unbuttering, and disjamming, and extarting. I felt that if I went on sacrificing articles of food, I should resemble the gentleman who endeavoured to escape from a bear, and in order to gain time, threw away, one by one, his articles of clothing, so that the animal might pause and examine them, and ultimately found himself—well, never mind how!—with the bear in full chase still, and a ladies' school approaching. So I broke out in a fresh place, and tried exercise.

What form of exercise do you ask? Every form. I walked myself hoarse. I rowed myself silly. I played lawn-tennis till I had not a sound tendon anywhere about me. I got on a bicycle and pitched on my head in all the principal thoroughfares leading out of London. I even rode, before breakfast, at great expense, upon a horse—at least, the proprietor said it was a horse, but it didn't look much like it, still less behave as such. But still they required letting out.

Convinced at last that ordinary forms of exertion were useless, I plunged deeper. I took boxing lessons, and engaged in mock combat with the esteemed professor of an establishment in the vicinity of the Tottenham Court Road, who charged me three-and-sixpence an hour, plus the cost of indefinite liquid refreshment, for hitting my nose at intervals with sufficient force to knock my head against a neighbouring wall. I went to a gymnasium, and hung on to a bar, and lifted myself up by the chin, and fell off every-

thing that admitted of being fallen off from. I took fencing lessons, and was pierced to the heart on an average once in five minutes. But still they had to be made larger.

At last it became only too evident to me that nature must have its way and I ceased to struggle. I bade farewell to elegance. I ceased to abuse my tailor for misfits, and went to be measured manfully to suit (tweed suit) the altered circumstances. When friends who had not seen me for a while accosted me in the street, and suggested, cheerfully, that I was getting quite stout, I ceased to brain them, as I had formerly done, and submitted to the inquisition like a martyr at the stake. I even went so far as to put a penny in the slot and try my weight at stations on the Metropolitan Railway. In short, I resigned myself to my sad fate like a true philosopher, and wondered whether I might one day return to my pristine bulk, if only in the character of a lean and slippered pantaloon. The very word pantaloon, in connection with leanness, seemed, however, to breathe of satire to me.

But I was not condemned to permanent stoutness. A change came which caused me to remember that dark is the night before the dawn, that it is a long lane that has no turning, and that by waiting till the clouds roll by, Johnnie, the best results may confidently be anticipated.

I did not grow thin all at once, but by a gradual scientific process, the exact details of which I have preserved for the sake of our common humanity in a tabulated form, and now bequeath to man—fat man.

Cause of reduction in weight.	*Amount.*	
	st.	*lbs.*
I went to hear a Greek Play	0	3
My mother-in-law came and stayed for a month .	1	7
I received from my publishers twelve unfavourable reviews of a book by which I had expected to win eternal fame 0 7		
Deduct allowance for one buttery column of praise written by a private friend in an obscure local paper 0 1		
	0	6
My Christmas bills grew fatter than ever I had done. Result, per annum	0	2
We had seven cooks in thirteen months. Two robbed us; three couldn't cook; one received visits from soldiers in the dining-room when we were out and in the kitchen when we were in; one set fire to the house because she was put out, and so she thought she would like the fire to keep her company and be put out too, and all drank	0	7
The people next door played dance music all day and nearly all night	0	3
My wife wasn't kind to me for a week, because I walked down a sequestered glade with Miss Robinson at a picnic	0	2
I lost eighteenpence at *vingt-et-un*	0	1
One of my two grey whiskers came off on the stage just as I was blessing my daughter at some amateur theatricals, with the result of turning		

	st.	*lbs.*
choking sobs into convulsive mirth, at my expense	0	3
My children all had measles	0	2
Directly they got well, the housemaid had scarlet fever	0	4
Our spare bedroom was occupied without intermission for seven months by friends who liked seeing everything that was to be seen, and expected me to take them	0	5
I lost one new glove in a train	0	½
I wrote a letter in my best style to the *Times*, and no notice was taken of it	0	1
I waited three hours at the Pit entrance to the Lyceum Theatre and then didn't get in . .	0	5
My mother-in-law came again—six weeks . .	2	0
I spent four evenings trying to compose a comic piece for the *Penny Screamer* and failed utterly	2	7
Total . .	9	2½

NO. 999.

THE above numerals do not represent the inscription on my front door, or my distinguishing mark at Portland, or an uncivil cabman whose card I have demanded—but my Telephone Number.

I was very proud of it at first. I had it printed on my note paper, I mentioned it to my friends, and regarded the telephone as a splendid invention, and to me, personally, a mighty convenience and facility in business.

Mind, I don't say it is not so even now. I only wish to remark that it is not an unmixed blessing, and that I am the dancing, running, grovelling slave of that instrument from 9.30 a.m. to 6.30 p.m. You see there is no toying with it. When it begins to buzz, I have to go to it immediately if I don't want to be buzzed mad, because it won't stop till I do go; and whether I am writing something that needs all my little stock of brains, or am in the middle of a most confidential interview—it is all the same.

Imagine this sort of thing:—

Me (*giving advice in my most expressive tones*): "I have thought most anxiously over the matter, and, in my opinion, your best course will be"—

Telephone: Buzz-zz-zz-zz-zz-zz-zz—

Me: "Excuse me one moment while I just speak to some one at the telephone."

I go to the telephone, and find that it has been set in motion by my wife at the Civil Service Stores, in sheer wantonness of mischief, and that she is sniggering at the other end as she asks me how I am. I dismiss her with a dignified rebuke, which loses some of its majesty because of my inability to make her appreciate the *tone* in which it is uttered, and resume.

"As I was about to say, I think your best course will be to write to Jones"—

Telephone: Buzz-zz-zz-zz-zz-zz-zz-zz—

Me: "Pray forgive me for a minute, but I hear the telephone again."

I return to the instrument, and identify as the assailant, Brown, who asks me whether I shall be in at four. I tell him that I shall, and retrace my steps.

"I was just remarking that after very anxious consideration, I see nothing for it but a letter to Jones to the effect"—

Telephone: Buzz-zz-zz-zz-zz-zz-zz-zz—

Me: "I must really apologise for the interruption, but there is some one else at the telephone."

I go back once more to the telephone and inquire who it is. *Answer:* "Are you No. 979?" *Reply:* "No, I am No. 999." *Rejoinder:* "Then they've put me on to the wrong number."

Once more I begin.

"As I just pointed out, the matter is an extremely anxious one, and I have felt great difficulty in coming to a *conclusion*, but on the whole"—

Telephone: Buzz-zz-zz-zz-zz-zz-zz-zz-zz—

Me: "I am really very sorry but there is somebody at the telephone again."

I am about to rise, but my visitor can stand it no longer, and fells me to the earth with his umbrella in a passion. So I don't go to the telephone that time.

From various causes my telephone does not always render a conversation very distinctly. Sometimes the gentleman at the other end speaks too near to the instrument, in which case I hear sounds which seem to indicate that he is trying to swallow a baked potato at one mouthful. Sometimes he speaks too far from the instrument, in which case I hear nothing. Sometimes the wire gets in contact with another wire, and then I get a mixture of what my friend is saying to me, and some one else's friend is saying to him, and am left in uncertainty as to whether Robinson wishes to see me about an important matter of legal business, or is anxious to know my views on the subject of pig iron or shirting.

I am not naturally selfish, but I could wish to keep my telephone a little more to myself. I don't mean that I want to talk at both ends; but that it is occasionally put to irreverent use by young and frivolous persons associated with me. I can best illustrate this by another example.

I am pouring out stores of wisdom to a client, and he is hanging upon my every word.

Me: "I base my conclusions upon three grounds: First —I think it is clear"—

Preternaturally distinct voice of an articled clerk at the telephone in the next room: "Have you got three good Dress Circles in the front row for Thursday night?

Me: "I think it is clear"—

Same voice: "Well then, can I have them for Tuesday?"

Me: "Clear"—

Same voice: "Are they in the middle?"

Me: "I say quite clear"—

Same voice: "Then why the dickens didn't you say so?"

Up to this point my visitor and I have listened to these remarks in a kind of stupor; but his face gradually assumes an expression of gentle reproach, as if to say—"I really was not aware that you kept a Box Office." I smile a sickly smile, and say, in faltering tones, that I rather think I hear a voice at the telephone. I leave the room, and when I get outside—well, I won't say what happens, because a man is presumed to be innocent until he is proved to be guilty, and they have never been able to bring home to me the death of the young articled clerk, who was last seen alive when he went to the telephone that day, though I have always been suspected.

The myrmidons whose duty it is to place me in communication, through the telephone, with other people, and other people with me, are evidently of opinion that brevity is the soul of wit, for they wax very impatient if my conversation is at all prolonged, and interpose frequently in the middle of it with the inquiry—"Have you finished?" to which I reply in tones of asperity, which increase with every repetition, "No!" The following conveys some faint idea of how the interview might be taken down by a shorthand writer, if he were able to catch the words without distinguishing the voices:—

"I wanted to tell you that I called on Souser yesterday, *and he* seemed quite willing to—Have you finished? No!

—act with us; but he wished to be quite clear that we were at one with him, and he said—Have you finished? *No!*—he would put down his ideas in writing for our consideration; and I replied to this—Have you finished? NO!—that it was a very good idea, and we would consider his memorandum carefully, and let him know as soon as possible whether it expressed our views; also, and he added—Have you finished? NO!—that he should be quite willing to guarantee all expenses up to the limit of—Have you finished? NO!—but I assured him that we did not require this, and our only anxiety was—Have you finished? NO!"

At this point I have grown purple with rage at the repeated interruptions; and the attendants on their side feel that I am presuming too far on their good nature. So they cut me off in my prime—telephonically—and Jones remains listening at the other end; but never another syllable does he hear, for the very sufficient reason that my telephone and his are no longer on speaking terms.

I should like, in conclusion, just to mention—I am sure I beg your pardon, but my telephone is buzzing furiously, and I really must go to it. I will be back in the next leaf.

TOM RAWE.

WHEN I entered the school Tom Rawe was one of the last boys in the First Form. He had been in that position for about six months, and he continued to occupy it for something like another year. Then he passed a very fair examination, and was moved into the Second Form. In the Second Form again he stayed for a long time, then again also passed a very fair examination at last, and was moved. History repeated itself in this way until one day it was suggested to Tom Rawe's father that his son was not regarded as an ornament to the school, and that his removal, not into another Form but into another atmosphere, would be regarded as a personal favour by the school authorities. So Tom Rawe's father took him away, and I believe commemorated the auspicious occasion by applying a leather strap to the most vulnerable but least vital portion of his anatomy.

My recollections of Tom Rawe, which are copious, may all be summed up in the monosyllable—fist. I was in fact introduced to him through the medium of that weapon, inasmuch as on the very day I entered the school he placed it within a quarter of an inch of my nose, and indicated *without* any needless circumlocution, that he was prepared

on the shortest notice to punch my head. The heartiness of his intentions was so obvious that I may at this distance of time confess to having experienced a sense of relief when some other nose attracted his observation, and he transferred his attention to it.

I do not believe that there ever was a boy born into this world with such an innate love of fighting as Tom Rawe. He simply revelled in it. He may be said to have gone through that period of his life with his "guard" up and his "left" well advanced. If by any pretence he could pick a quarrel with another boy—whether of his own size or twice as big mattered not a whit—pick that quarrel he would, and issue a challenge or proceed to immediate hostilities on the spot. But bless you, *that* was not enough to whet Tom Rawe's appetite. He used almost, as it were, to fight his way to and from school. Butcher-boys, grocer-boys, boys in other schools, grown-up bricklayers, all alike furnished Tom Rawe with continual opportunities of head-punching.

Tom Rawe's fighting career was not one of altogether unchequered success. His tendency to assail heavy metal brought him occasionally into dire extremities and, on an average, if his right eye was not black his left eye was, and *vice versâ*. But his face was as tough as a leather saddle, he had no beauty to spoil, and I should say that he felt pain about as much as a rhinoceros would feel a gentle smack on the back. On one occasion, however, a savage street-boy (in whose defence it might perhaps be urged that he had probably been unmercifully thrashed) propelled half a brick-bat in Tom Rawe's face, and broke his lower jaw; which incident caused Tom Rawe to

retire from active warfare just as long as his jaw took time to heal.

He was never known to learn a lesson from the day he entered the school till the day he left it. His occasional success in examinations was due to the means of refreshment with which he assisted his faculties on these occasions. His learning then was not, on these occasions, in him, but about him. Translations of likely selections from Virgil would be secreted up one arm. Ditto from Ovid up the other arm. Interesting dates were generally commemorated on his shirt sleeves. Problems of Euclid were frequently worked out inside the lining of his waistcoat. Golden passages of Syntax found a secure haven in his trouser-pockets. These little aids to a defective preparation would be supplemented by copying off another boy's paper whenever convenient chance offered, and, in the case of *vivâ voce* examination, by extracting the materials for an answer from the nearest boy, by means of threats addressed in a hoarse whisper, and conveying volumes of meaning.

I have described a few characteristics of Tom Rawe which I vividly remember, and to the best of my belief have not exaggerated in a single particular. But I would be slow to finish without saying that he had his good qualities. He was the unfailing champion of the weak against the strong, and though he bullied little boys a bit on his own account, he never allowed any one else to do so. Therein he resembled some older people, and one or two nations that I have read of in books.

What becomes of such boys in after life? According to all properly constituted story books they finish up without exception at the gallows; but then properly constituted story

books are not infallible. Anyway Tom Rawe settled down into a highly respectable member of society, and is popularly believed to be henpecked by his wife; and very few of his friends of later life would guess, I suspect, what a young rascal he was when I knew him first.

OUR LAUNCH TRIP.

I WAS led on. It is quite foreign to every instinct of my nature to do anything daring or expensive, but you know what women are. At first, when we were sojourning (if you can call it sojourning when you have only got lodgings) at Maidenhead for our summer holiday, my wife was satisfied with a large family boat taken by the hour, so I took it by the hour. Then she thought she would like to have it by the week, so I took it by the week. She next found that the boys were constantly monopolising it for fishing, and that when it was available for other purposes, it was replete with perambulating gentles and lob-worms and stray hooks; and she made a decree thereupon that the boys must have a separate punt, and confine their loathsome angling appurtenances to the same. So I engaged a separate punt, and fondly thought that the land would have rest. Not so. She broke out in a fresh place and calmly announced at breakfast one morning that she thought it would be very jolly to have a steam launch, and go for a two days' trip.

"A *what?*" I said, turning pale, and with my hair on end.

"A steam launch," she replied, with her hair frizzled in *front*, not by terror, but hot irons.

"You don't really mean it."

"I do, though. The holidays only come once a year, and I don't see why we shouldn't enjoy ourselves."

"But think of the expense, my dear."

I might as well have asked her to think of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

It would be needless and humiliating to describe how my fortifications were assailed, my out-works captured, my walls scaled, my garrison overpowered, my purse taken. We had a steam launch, and started off, a party of five, with intent to go to Goring, stay the night there, and come back on the following day.

The party consisted of the present writer, the wife of his bosom and his pocket, and three others; the latter being Frank Lynam, a good-looking bachelor relative of mine with a tenor voice; Jack Harrison, also a bachelor, renowned for marvellous powers of organising the commissariat department on all such expeditions, and a nephew of Jack Harrison, a young Australian who has, I believe, a surname, but was always called "Mr. George," by my wife in earnest, and by the others consequently as a jest.

It will be noticed that the extraneous persons were all of the masculine sex and single men. It may be that my wife, while not at all objecting to receive polite attentions herself, is very jealous of me, and that this peculiarity of hers is carried to most unreasonable and inconvenient lengths. That however, is, I feel, not a fitting subject to dwell upon in these pages. I merely state as a bare fact that I suggested no less than nine names of unexceptionable young ladies, possessing between them every variety of beauty and intelligence, and that each one was in turn contumeliously

rejected, and, having said that, I leave the reader to draw his or her own conclusion, and to say impartially whether I was not perfectly justified in flatly declining to invite my wife's mother, whom she desired to substitute for my candidates. I shall be happy to send a stamped directed envelope to any one desirous of expressing an opinion strongly in the affirmative.

Besides our party there were, of course, the captain and the engine-man. The former, who was also the owner, was a ruddy-faced, thick-set person, with a stubbly beard, and a great thirst, by name Williams; and the engine-man *was* a man, and that is all I know. His countenance was so begrimed with smuts and coal-dust, that I should no more recognise him if he were washed (I don't suggest that he ever is), than I should know one of the Moore and Burgess Minstrels, if I met him in Rotten Row in a frock-coat and etceteras to match, and as he was nearly always down below, and to all appearances inside a furnace, opportunities for conversation were rare.

If I were asked to describe the one feature of that expedition which stood out prominently beyond all others on the first day, I should unhesitatingly say that it was the manner in which I was ignored. I had not a voice, not so much as a whisper, in any single arrangement, great or small. Jack Harrison directed the eating and drinking, and said when and where, and how long we were to stop. Mr. George attended to my wife's every want; Frank Lynam supplied the party with stale jokes (they wouldn't listen to mine—though immeasurably superior). Even Williams helped himself to my bottled beer with an assured air of proprietor*ship* before my very eyes. As for my wife she thanked

them all for taking liberties at my expense, and kept asking me if it wasn't kind. I don't recollect a single thing I was asked to do, except after meals, when all the broken bits of stale bread were passed on to me, and I was told to feed the swans. Bitterness of spirit and drumstick of chicken were my portion all through that day.

Thus neglected I naturally fell back on Williams, who was at the wheel; first making sure that there was no notice up forbidding any one to speak to him. I think Williams felt for me. He talked kindly to me, and allowed me to take the wheel off his hands and steer, while he alternately imbibed and instructed me in the art—I don't mean of imbibing but of navigating a steam launch, which is more difficult. I am afraid we ran a few rowing boats down while I was at the helm, and carried a punt away which had just been fastened across the stream, and had half a dozen or so of people in it inanely angling for gudgeon; and on entering a lock I ran the stem of the launch into the lock wall, thereby doing serious damage to the bowsprit, and removing the nose and left arm of a female deity attired in a blue necklace and golden crown who did duty for a figure-head. This was afterwards mentioned in the bill. But then I was a novice, and all experience must be bought, and besides it took my attention off, when I looked down into the bows and heard Frank Lynam singing some silly song, and the others listening to him all eyes and ears. I consider singing very much out of place on a steam launch myself. Of course a recitation well delivered is quite a different thing, and becomes doubly interesting when it is original. I had several excellent recitations of my own writing in my repertoire, as they all perfectly well knew, but do you think I

was asked to give one? Not a bit of it. Nothing but that sickening tenor would do for them. He waited under casements till the stars did everything they possibly could except shooting; he bade enough good-nights to include every girl in a large boarding school; he remembered old gardens; he requested a maid of Athens to restore his heart; and (when I suppose he had got it back) he asked another young woman to stay with him his darling stay, and like a dream her life should pa-a-ass away—and all the rest of the *molto expressione* business. The effect it had on Williams was to overspread his features with massive contempt, and I really don't wonder at it.

Although from the commencement crushed by the awful expense of the undertaking, and the composition of the party, I had had a faint wish to do justice to the occasion in point of personal appearance, and to that intent I had invested in a new straw hat to replace a somewhat dingy article that had done duty in the family boat. But it seemed as if everything was to conspire against my peace of mind that day; for the hat was rather too small, and the wind was high, and after holding it in hideous discomfort at intervals and then letting go and saving it just as it was parting with my last hair, a sudden gust took it fairly off. Williams immediately reversed the engine, and a small flotilla of boats proceeded to race for it, and after an impromptu regatta, the article was secured and handed up ignominiously on the blade of a scull amid much laughter, in which all my party joined heartily. It was then placed against the funnel to dry, and Williams presented me with a sou'wester hat, in which singularly appropriate covering for a bright sunny day in August I traversed some miles and

passed through several crowded locks. Still I felt that Williams meant kindly by me, and I was naturally even more at home with him in the sou'wester than I had been before, because it obliterated all traces of my noble birth and genteel appearance. I leant on him more and more, and became deeply interested in his steering admonitions to me and his directions to the man in the furnace.

These latter were laconic and simple. When he wanted the launch to proceed rapidly, he desired the person in question to "Drive like"—well never mind what. The immediate result of this being always to make the launch quiver like a whale in convulsions, he would modify the previous direction with a stern command to "Stop that shaking," and this behest was obeyed by the obvious process of reverting to the previous rate of progression. On entering a lock he was frequently delivered of the apparently bibulous stage direction, "'Arf a pint astern," and the act of entering the same was invariably signalised by his uttering a sort of compound word which resolved itself into "Easy a head." These four sayings constituted to the best of my belief his whole nautical code, and seemed to embrace all needful communication between himself and the engine-man, except the passing from one to the other of alcoholic liquid. I will say for Williams that he drank fair, but then it must be remembered that he was not inside a furnace, and the other man was, and I take it that a man in a furnace gets rather a long start in that sort of competition.

I encouraged Williams to talk and learnt many particulars of a deeply interesting character. For instance that he had been for many years in charge of launches belonging to a

gentleman in these parts, and had at length saved enough to buy one on his own account; that he was married and had numerous offspring; that his wife had a head she had; that he should take the engines out of her (meaning not Mrs. Williams but the launch) and do her up thoroughly in the winter; that the season might have been worser and might have been better from a launch-letting point of view; that he liked a quiet party on board, but sometimes got a rowdy lot as did nothing but drink champagne and go on awful; that there was not another launch on the river as could keep up with the Dahlia—which he pronounced Dă-lĭar—as ever he had seen anyhow; and many other equally interesting facts which I elicited by sympathetic questions.

But Williams was to come out stronger yet, in a social way. Hearing him hum a tune I asked him if he could sing. He said yes he could a bit. Would he give us one I asked. Well he didn't so much mind if he did. Accordingly I called out to the party in the bows to keep quiet, as Williams was going to sing us a song. My relative with a tenor put on a fine operatic curl of the lip, but they could not refuse, and indeed they were evidently rather curious, and so was I, to know what was coming. This was what did come, after a great deal of throat clearing, and first beginning too high up and then too low down, and having to start fair again. The tune selected was that of "Auld Lang Syne," and the song, as Williams afterwards proudly owned to me was original:—

"You talks of punts and boats perraps,
And sailin' wessels too,
Of gondlers shoved by furrin' chaps,
Likewise of the can—oo.

But what I says is none of these
  Can 'old a candlestick
To my steam launch, and if you please,
  I'll state the reasons thick.

She's like a child to manage; you
  Can send her fast or slow;
Her engines (which I bought 'em new),
  A child could easy know.

She often runs into a skiff,
  And cuts it into bits,
But lor' they're seldom drownded if
  They only keeps their wits.

When to a lock she's getting close,
  You 'aven't got to shout,
You blows a whistle like a bos—
  —un's and the lockman's out.

And all the boats as was before,
  They 'ave to go in arter,
Sich bein' I believe the law
  In Conservancy warter.

You ain't obliged with back and knees,
  And all your limbs to row;
Contrariwise you takes your ease,
  As smooth and nice you go.

She is a beauty that she is,
  My pretty launch Da-lĭa;
And modest is the figure, viz.,
  Four pound a day to hire."

When we reached Goring we left the launch with Williams and the engine-man in it (the latter still in the furnace, and for anything I can prove to the contrary intending to make up a bed in the same), and moved up the hill in procession to our inn. I moved last, and carried most of the wraps, not exactly because I insisted

on it, but rather owing to their being placed on me one after the other, as a matter of course. I missed the sympathy of Williams very much, and I almost think I should have crept back to the launch, and gone to bed on the damaged bowsprit without any dinner, if I had not found a kind barman who was very respectful and smoked as many of my cigars as I pressed on him, besides drinking what he called "srub" at my expense in the friendliest way.

Of course Harrison had ordered the dinner, and it was Mr. Harrison this, and Mr. Harrison that, with the landlord all the time, as if he were everybody and I nobody. I got so riled at this that I took my wife aside. When anything annoys you it is a great satisfaction to make it unpleasant for your wife—it is one of her noblest callings, I think, though I have never been able to get mine to see it in that light.

"My dear," I said, "it seems to me that your friend Jack Harrison is giving himself most confounded airs."

"What on earth do you mean?" she replied quite haughtily.

You will agree with me that this was not a proper and submissive answer.

"Why, I mean that he is ordering everything and everybody as if he were host instead of myself."

"Would you like me to tell him so?"

Another nasty thing to say.

"No, of course I don't wish to make unpleasantness, but I think it very bad form."

"How can you talk such nonsense? You know quite well that he is a splendid organiser and knows just what *is wanted* everywhere, and that the people at the inn will

do anything to please him. What would become of us if you were to take it in hand, I should like to know? I suppose we should get on as we did that day at Moulsford when you arranged everything so beautifully."

That shaft went home: I had asserted myself on the occasion referred to, and when a large party sat down to a picnic dinner produced under my own stage management, it gradually came to light that I had left all the knives and forks behind, packed twelve plates on the top of an open jam tart, forgotten to put a stopper in the pickles, omitted a corkscrew, and left the meat out of most of the sandwiches. Still I rallied under this knock-down blow, and came up for another round.

"Anyhow you needn't be perpetually asking Frank Lynam to sing his beastly tenor songs as if no one else could do anything."

"Who else *can* do anything? I think it was extremely good-natured of him to sing to our small party, when he is so much sought after everywhere for his voice."

"I suppose I can recite, can't I?"

"Gracious! You don't think we want to sit and listen to your recitations when we are enjoying ourselves on a launch! We are not a Penny Reading, or a Girl's Friendly Society, or a Parochial Concert, I suppose? We should all be bored to death, and you know very well you haven't got a single piece that I haven't heard over and over again till I could say it backwards."

Now what would you have done to that woman? Should you have hit her, or reduced her allowance for clothes by one half, or sent her back to her mother? I should like your opinion about it, because I have never

felt quite certain that I rose to the occasion. What I did was to wither her with a glance of unutterable reproach and anger—at least I was just going to do so when Mr. George came up and said he wanted to show her a view and would she mind walking a little way to see it. I turned on my heel with a gesture of ineffable scorn till I nearly twisted my ankle, but the only person who saw the movement was the waiter who had just come in to lay dinner. I rather thought at the time that his cheek blanched when he caught sight of my face, but am not positive about it now, as I noticed in the morning that he was naturally pallid.

The dinner was good—well, yes, I don't deny that. Neither should I contradict the statement, if any one made it, that it soothed me. Neither should I assert on oath that I was not gratified when Mr. George, after dinner, asked if I would oblige with one of my original recitations, and said that if I did not mind he should greatly like to hear "The Watch Tower." Whether my wife felt remorseful and had put him up to it I shall never know, because my pride (which is vast) will not allow me to ask her, but anyhow he made the request and the others chimed in approval, and after a little resistance I gave the Watch Tower in my best style, and was greatly applauded, not only in the room, but also by some village idlers who had congregated under the window, while I was at it. The Watch Tower always draws a crowded house. N.B. It is printed in pamphlet form, and may be obtained gratis from any respectable grocer by a purchaser of not less than one pound of tea.

I don't know whether it was the dinner or the recitation or my natural sweetness of disposition, or all combined, but I

melted wonderfully after this. I quite enjoyed Frank Lynam's singing, paid a compliment to Jack Harrison for the success of the dinner, squeezed my wife's hand under the table when nobody was looking, and rallied Mr. George on his gallantry, and I even went so far as to offer of my own accord to give another recitation. They all said they should like it immensely, but wasn't the moon shining brightly, and how jolly a little walk would be. So we put off my recitation until after the walk, and when we came back they seemed to have forgotten it, till I mentioned it, and then they said how nice it would be, but as it was rather late and we were going to start early in the morning, wouldn't it be wise to go to bed. So unfortunately we could not have the second one, though we all wanted it so much, and I was quite willing to give it.

We rose in good time and made our way back to the launch for the return journey, and found Williams and the engine-man all ready, and off we went. You will be glad to hear that they all behaved much better to me, and we were quite a merry party, but the ill luck which had prevented them from hearing my second recitation over night followed them most persistently all day. Several times I mentioned it, and always some unlucky impediment arose. Twice I had actually commenced, but on one occasion my wife was seized with sudden giddiness, and obliged to go and lie down in the saloon, and the other time Mr. George dropped something overboard (I think it was a pocket handkerchief), and the launch had to pull up to get it. I felt so sorry to disappoint them that even when we got home to a cold supper at out lodgings, I offered, though it was late and I was very tired, to give the piece; but Jack Harrison

became quite overcome at that moment with a dreadful toothache (which as he said had very strangely not come on once before all through the trip, though it had been extremely painful some time before that), and his groans were so loud that it was really impossible for any one to recite or any one else to listen. Happily the tooth got much better soon afterwards when we were playing *vingt-et-un* at a penny a dozen; indeed, Harrison became as lively as possible, and seemed quite to forget it.

When we said good-night I confess I thought my wife was a little too effusive to Jack Harrison for his catering, and Frank Lynam for his songs, and Mr. George for his attentions, and that they might have thanked me instead of her for the trip, or at all events coupled my name with the toast. Still I parted pleasantly with them, because I made allowances for their all being upset by not hearing my second recitation.

And so that trip came to an end, and I follow suit.

[NOTE ON THE MANUSCRIPT.—I have found this thing in a drawer where I was looking for stamps, and I consider that some of the remarks are most *unkind* and *ungentlemanly*, besides not being at *all* true. I never friz it with hot irons except when the air is so damp that it takes all the curl out, and any one who knows what the river is can say whether it *does* not make it like boiled rats' tails. And as for being

neglected, my husband has only *himself* to thank, because he sulked the whole of the first day, and wouldn't say a word to any one except the horrid launch man till they *all* noticed it, and were so sorry for me because they said I must lead a very unhappy life, though I don't really, only it's nice to be pitied. As for my being jealous it is ridiculous nonsense. My mamma is a most superior and highly cultivated woman and a *general* favourite, and I asked my husband to invite her simply because I knew she would have talked to him all the time, and been much better for him really than a parcel of bread-and-butter misses, with blue eyes and young enough to be his daughters, whom he is so partial to. Of course the gentlemen invited paid me polite attentions as they were *bound* to do, but they behaved in the nicest way, and said very few things indeed that I would not allow all the *world* to hear, and a pleasant time I should have had indeed that first day, if I had been left to my husband in the sulks, and two launch men all over coal dust and things. It is absurd about the expenses, which were *wonderfully* light, and my husband could afford it *perfectly* well, and it was a great success, and I don't care who sees this because it is all true, and I am a wife and a mother, and not going to have horrid remarks made about me without speaking, and any one else in my position would feel just the same.]

AN OLD SCHOOL LANE.

In olden days the boys at my school used to be ejected from the school premises into a certain lane leading out of Cannon Street, in the City of London, in the middle of the day for the space of one hour, in order that they might partake of such nourishment as they could obtain in a neighbourhood the buildings of which were principally composed of warehouses and offices.

The school door was inflexibly closed during about fifty minutes of that period, and although a good deal of vigour was expended in kicking at it, I am not aware that the janitor was ever induced on that account to re-open it before the allotted time.

Several of the boys assembled in the lane before the door was opened, but by an unwritten law which I never knew to be violated from the day of my entering the school to the day of my leaving it, the boys of the Head Form and Sixth Form waited at a certain corner at the top of the lane, some hundred yards or thereabouts from the door, while the boys belonging to the other Forms assembled round it. So marked was this social distinction that when I first got into the Sixth (I like to bring in by the heels somehow the fact implied in that sentence) I used to gobble up my dinners and get back to school as quickly as possible in order that I might assume an attitude of dignity at the

sacred corner in full sight of all who might gather in the inferior place of waiting.

It was an odd custom that, because, mind you, it was not a case of separate quarters being allotted to different Forms on the school premises—it was a distinction between waiting in one part of a public street and another. Who first started the idea I know not, but I do aver that it was part and parcel of the school manners and customs, and I dare not, even at this distance of date, contemplate what would have happened to any boy who attempted to disregard it.

There was a post at the top corner of the lane with a round knob sticking out of it. A boy told me once that the post was a cannon taken from the Russians in the Crimea, and the round knob protruding from it a cannon ball. He added that Cannon Street had derived its name from the fact of its being furnished with posts of a similar origin, and he wound up his interesting historical dissertation by a statement to the effect that in the event of the City being besieged, these posts could readily be uprooted and turned to their original purpose in less than no time. I believed implicitly every word he said, but I am free to confess that doubts have attacked me on passing the post in later life.

The names on the doors of the business premises which hemmed in the old school on every side produced some curious fancies in my mind when I was a very small boy. I remember, for instance, thinking that the words, "Antwerp and Rotterdam," inscribed then (and I believe now) on a brass plate on the door of a house which I passed every day just before reaching school, represented the names of

two gentlemen in partnership. Something led me one day to comment to my brother on the curiously geographical character of these names, and he at once disabused me of my error. He gave point to the elucidation by remarking that I was a little fool. I daresay I was; but it is so long ago that I really cannot be certain one way or the other.

I don't quite know whether I was fond of that old lane or not. After I had left school, I began to be almost sure that I was; but I have an impression that when we leave school we have rather a tendency to forget the little drawbacks and turn the blue fire all on to the other side of the picture. We are past the cane and the imposition book, and so we quickly forget that they ever made us uncomfortable in their several ways. On the other hand, we soon begin to have a lively appreciation of the fact that we had much longer holidays, much lighter responsibilities, and in a variety of ways a much better time of it at school than we shall ever get again till the holiday comes whereof no man can calculate the beginning or the end. Therefore, I say again that I am not quite sure whether I was particularly attached to that same lane. It generally smelt more or less of the industries of neighbouring establishments. It was extremely narrow. It was not extremely clean. It had a special capacity for retaining fogs longer than any other thoroughfare I ever had to do with. Its approaches were not spacious, and its attractions would be hard to define. But it contained the old school, and I trod it daily when the highway of life was all in front of me—and so I am fain to look back along the road to the starting-point, and say a word about it in this leaf.

DE MORTUIS.

THE title of this leaf is not a bright one; but it forced itself upon me as I retraced in thought the other evening the road of my school-life. A long array rose up before me of young lives once bright and full of promise, which have passed away beyond the hopes and struggles, the successes and failures, the love and bitterness, of the world in which we, whom they left behind, are still playing our parts as best we may.

One by one their faces came back to me. I remembered how this boy was struck down, in full health and vigour, by a terrible accident. He was amongst us one day, just as usual, and but a few hours afterwards we knew that we should never see his face again. We went about with a certain hushed feeling upon us for a few days, realising only partially, I think (as mercifully is the case with young boys), the solemnity of what had happened. He was a big lad, backward in his studies, and placed, therefore, among boys much smaller than himself; but he was as kind-hearted and gentle as he was physically powerful, and was never known to use his great strength meanly.

How different was the next face. It was that of a pale, delicate, sensitive boy, scarcely fitted, perhaps, ever for the rough edges of public school life, though he held his

own bravely, and had a high spirit. He lived to pass out of the school, but a dread complaint had fastened on him, and very gradually worked its sure end.

I was with him a few years after he left school, on the day when, as a last hope, he sailed for sunnier climes. I was with him when he came back again to die.

Other faces followed in the ghostly procession. Some of them were the faces of those who were called upon to lay down their arms almost before they had begun to fight the battle of life; others of those to whom the same resistless call came later in the struggle; all of them before the days had passed away when life is full of hope, and the young heart feeds on the eager expectation of time yet to come, rather than on the remembrance of time gone by. But I must not linger over them. What to me are only saddened memories of the past, which rise up now and again in a quiet hour, may well appear, perhaps, to savour of morbid sentiment to those who cannot make 'the dry bones live' of those of whom I write; who cannot, in fancy, call them back as loving, living friends and comrades.

But it may be that to old and even to young schoolboys a chord of memory will be touched for the moment by what I have written here, which, if not strained so as to hinder the work of life, and make us dreamers when we should be up and doing, may well be awakened at times. The school-mates who are sleeping the last great sleep should not, I think, be banished altogether from our thoughts. They are woven among the threads of our early days. We started the journey side by side with them; shared the same difficulties and discouragements, the same joys and triumphs. They have faded from our

view, and their places know them no more; but at least we may turn aside for a moment from the almost breathless current in which we move to lay a flower, fragrant of softened memory and of friendship of old times, on their graves. It is that feeling which has prompted me, almost against my own will, to write these few words on a subject necessarily tinged with sadness, and contrasting, perhaps, discordantly with the lighter topics around it.

MY TASTING ORDER.

ONCE upon a time when I was in the habit of drinking wine—in moderation—I was favoured by a merchant with a document called a 'Tasting Order,' for the London Docks. For the benefit of those to whom the expression conveys no meaning, I may observe that a Tasting Order is a document authorising the bearer to go into the wine vaults, and taste a sample of the wine stored there, belonging to the donor of the order. Generally speaking, this permission is really an excuse for exploring these vaults, which cover acres upon acres of ground, and are one of the sights of London—if that which you cannot see can be said to be a sight.

I presented my order rather late one afternoon, and, leaving daylight behind me at the top of a flight of stone stairs, soon found myself wending my way between tiers of casks in what would have been total darkness but for the circumstance of my conductor's holding in his hand a stick, at the end of which was a lump of clay with a candle in it, and of my being similarly provided. As my eyes grew more accustomed to the darkness made visible, I could see, when I held my candle up, that the roof was covered with a thick fungus of exquisitely white colour hanging down like frozen snow. The whole place was weird in the ex-

treme, and its effect upon my nerves was not lessened by the ghostly figure of the cellarman looming in front of me, who turned his head round every now and then to make some explanatory remark in a low hoarse voice; or by hollow sounds occasionally heard, which I found to mean that in some part of the vaults a cooper was at work. Now and again we came upon one of these individuals mending the hoops of a cask, or performing some like office by the light of a candle such as we were carrying.

We stopped once or twice while the cellarman produced a glass, where from I am sure I don't know, and stuck a sort of gimlet into a cask and filled the glass with the wine that spurted out, and handed it to me; and then put a peg into the hole that he had made in the cask, and knocked the peg down with a mallet produced where from I am equally sure I don't know, and cut off the projecting piece of peg so neatly that the cask itself would not have known that a hole had been made in it, except for the pain.

On these occasions I pretended to drink, but I really insinuated nearly all the liquid on to the floor, while the cellarman was busy with the cask, because I had heard all sorts of stories about people being quite sober in the vaults but uproariously intoxicated immediately on coming out into the open air, and I had a character to lose, or at all events I thought so. I mention this proceeding of mine particularly, for reasons which will hereafter appear.

I suppose we must have been down there about half an hour—I know I had seen more casks and felt more darkness than ever my philosophy had dreamt of, and there seemed to be no end of them in any direction that our

limited range of light would penetrate—when the cellarman slapped his leg with a gesture of vexation.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"Why, sir, it's just a little before closing hour, and I forgot to tell our chief something I was perticler told to mention to 'im before leavin' to-day, and 'e'll be gone before we gets back. I am a empty 'ogs'ead, that's what I am."

I offered to go back instantly with him, but he would not hear of it, because as he said we had not been half over the place. Then I begged him to let me wait for him, but that he was also disinclined to do—the fact being, I believe, that he had been told by some one in authority to show particular attention to my humble self. However, ultimately we compromised it in this way, that he agreed to go back towards the entrance of the vaults, as he felt sure he would soon find a cooper whom he could send with his message; and he half promised that if the coopers had gone (it was about their time for doing so) he would go and deliver it himself. So he departed and I was left standing there with my candle.

I remained very patiently for a while, and after the cellarman's candle had disappeared in the darkness, I watched for its return, and listened for the sound of his voice in case I should hear him calling to a cooper. But the candle did not return, and I heard no voice.

Then I got a little impatient and sat on a cask. But it occurred to me that the cask might not be the most appropriate thing possible to come in contact with my garments, so I got off it again. Then I grew rather dismal and tried to raise my spirits by whistling a tune. But the tune would *not* come, and my spirits refused to rise. And then I

began to feel creepy, and to pine for company, and I wished the cellarman many evil things for being so long away.

In this uncomfortable manner, time went on until at last I became seriously alarmed lest the cellarman should have forgotten all about me and gone home, and unable to stand it any longer I decided to go back and make for the entrance. So I started off in what I believed to be a main gangway, and had proceeded about twenty yards when I suddenly went flop into an obstacle, nearly shot over it head-first, the stick with the candle on it flew out of my hand, and in a second the candle was extinguished, and I was sprawling over a cask in total darkness in the middle of those enormous vaults, without a match in my pocket or a landmark of any description to guide me!

I staggered up and tried to feel my way along to some main passage, but I found myself hopelessly involved in a wilderness of casks, and when I gained a gleam of hope from what seemed to be a clear space, I lost it immediately afterwards on coming to a dead stop against a cask or a wall. After barking my shins and bruising my hands, and shaking up my system like a jelly, and shouting myself hoarse (every shout bringing back a most blood-curdling echo), I gave up these efforts, and sitting wearily on a cask, for I was long past any care about my clothes now, and thought only of my skin, I tried to reckon up the situation calmly. It was perfectly clear that I should never get away unless some one came and rescued me. What then were the chances of rescue? From what the cellarman had said himself I concluded that the closing hour for the workmen would be well past by now, and that not a single cooper

would enter the vaults before morning, even if any should happen to come within hail of me then.

Yes, but the cellarman—the cellarman specially told off to conduct me over the vaults—what about him? Well, of course, he might be expected to return any moment and raise a regular hue and cry after me if he could not find me. But then he ought to have come back long ago. Perhaps he had a short memory. Perhaps he had forgotten all about me, and was now quietly eating tea and winkles on the domestic hearth. Perhaps he had been taken ill suddenly. The only conclusion I could arrive at was that I was the hopeless, hapless, helpless victim of circumstances, and that as I could not possibly do anything but wait, I had better do that.

I waited—sometimes sitting, sometimes standing; after a while mostly sitting, because the fumes from the wine casks began to have rather a drowsy effect upon me. So much so that I think I should have fallen asleep if I had not suddenly been roused in a most unexpected and startling manner.

I have mentioned the growth of white fungus hanging from the roof of the vaults, which I had noticed as I walked along, and had seen dimly with my candle. To my utter astonishment I heard a succession of sounds echoing along the vaults, as if a number of tiny little gongs were being sounded, and instantaneously the white fungus became a blaze of dazzling light—so bright that it was quite painful to my eyes after being so long in darkness, and I had to rub them and shade them and blink like an owl.

When I was able to look up I found that I was in a corner of a side vault from which I could only see a small

part of the main vaults, but within the limits of my vision the fungus was heaving and shaking all over, and I caught the sound of what seemed like a number of very small shrill voices. I could almost swear that I heard one voice call out imperiously for hot water, and another for clean boots. I may have been mistaken about the actual words, but certainly not as to what followed, after this disturbance had been going on for a few minutes. Another signal was given just like the first, and then from out of the fungus there were let down numberless little white ladders made of some material about as stout as ordinary string, and to my speechless surprise the fungus opened in all directions, and down came a whole company of the oddest little folk that ever mortal eyes beheld, and swarmed over the casks.

My bewildered senses slowly grasped that these personages averaged in height about eight inches, and were beautifully made, and that some of them were very handsomely, and others more humbly, dressed; but in both cases alike their costumes were, in different grades, closely identified with the surroundings of the place. For instance, several of the little ladies had dresses exquisitely made from a material closely resembling gold and silver foil, and the cavaliers affected much a species of armour composed apparently of capsules, while many of the humbler folk wore cobweb garments and hats made apparently out of pieces of bung; others again were so got up as to exactly resemble coopers and cellarmen, and a few of them wore the uniform which I had noticed on the Dock Police. They seemed to spread all over the vaults, and some of them, belonging to the lower orders, ran about on the dusty ground, but in

higher circles they kept to the casks, and walked about on them, and jumped from one to another with wondrous agility, though I noticed that the ladies always looked round behind before taking a jump, and evidently did not knowingly allow their ankles to be seen.

I was so completely taken aback by this spectacle that I could do nothing but sit and stare around me goggle-eyed, without giving a thought to the question how I might be regarded by the assembled company. But the point was settled without much delay, for I suddenly found myself confronted by a gallant warrior cased in a complete suit of yellow capsule armour, helmet and all, with a miniature vine leaf painted on the breast-plate. He had been leisurely advancing, I suppose, in my direction, and came upon me. Quick as lightning his hand went to his side and he drew a corkscrew and prepared to defend himself with a gallantry that I never saw surpassed—not even at Marathon, and it was warm work for all of us there, I can tell you.

"Sir," said he in a piping little voice that I heard perfectly, "you appear to be one of the gigantic and misshapen animals called man whom we permit to infest this place during Custom House hours. Judging from a cursory inspection, I estimate your bulk at 253 times my own, but Alphonso, Marquis of Amontillado, knows no fear, and I have much pleasure in requesting you to come on."

I would not have harmed the little chap for the world, and addressed him in a tone of the deepest humility.

Immediately I began to speak, however, the sound of my voice brought a whole troop of the revellers hurrying to the spot. They assumed a threatening attitude, and gimlets and corkscrews and tiny mallets were raised against me in

all directions. But the Marquis of Amontillado, who was evidently a person high in authority, lifted his hand and said haughtily—

"Peace, sirs. This concerns my honour alone."

And then they drew back a little way, and listened in silence, eyeing me with evident and not very friendly curiosity.

"Most gallant knight," I said, "I am here by an accident, and entirely against my own will. I was brought in in Custom House hours, and by some accident have been left to be called for. I mean no harm to your noble company, and pray that I may be conducted to the entrance and allowed to depart in peace."

"You speak very properly," replied the Marquis, quite condescendingly, "and I am sorry that I cannot oblige you. But unfortunately by our laws you have committed a capital crime (quite unintentionally, I feel sure) in beholding us at our revels, which are never allowed to be seen by mortals, and I regret extremely to say that you must suffer the temporary inconvenience of dying by my hand."

"Surely," I replied still more humbly, "your laws cannot be meant to apply to such a case as mine."

"Certainly not; but our Acts of Parliament are, I am sorry to say, habitually ill-drawn, and frequently oblige us to do violence to our feelings to an extent which is positively revolting. May I ask whether you have any preference as to the precise portion of your unwieldy frame in which I shall proceed to insert this weapon."

He tapped the corkscrew to emphasise the close of the remark.

"But surely, noble sir," I rejoined, "your laws are capable

of alteration. I cannot have the honour of addressing the Medes and Persians."

"Our laws can only be altered by Queen and Parliament. But stay—I have a thought. Her Majesty will be out this evening, and most of the Peers and members of the House of Commons are here. I may perhaps be able to run an Act through and save you yet—if there is no obstruction. I confess that you have interested me, though your ugliness is appalling. I will go and see what can be done. Meanwhile I fear I must put you under arrest. If you have no sword about you to surrender I will accept an indelible pencil. Here, Vino de Pasto and Hochheimer, mount guard over this colossal piece of flesh. You know what to do if he attempts to escape."

The Marquis bowed ceremoniously and left me, while two other knights (evidently of lower rank, as they had blue armour with no vine leaf painted on it, and their corkscrews were of inferior quality) got on a cask on either side of that on which I was sitting and watched me narrowly. The throng which had collected round increased every minute also. In fact it was becoming evident that my fate was a subject of considerable interest to the community.

After a few minutes of this suspense the cry was raised "Parliament is sitting." This passed from mouth to mouth and caused great excitement near me, which was increased when three little gentlemen—one of whom held a gold stick, another a silver stick, and a third a black rod—ran up and down excitedly and cried out at the top of their lungs that her Majesty's faithful Lords and Commons were summoned to hold a special Court in Parliament.

The crowd at once followed the heels of the three little gentlemen, and as they swept by me I heard one lady ask gold stick piteously whether she might have an order; to which appeal he replied that the House was crowded and the free list entirely suspended.

So completely had the centre of attraction shifted that I found myself alone with my two guards. The Parliamentary proceedings were not within my view, and I could only hear a distant hubbub. As I have already mentioned, I had discovered myself in a somewhat out-of-the-way corner.

My curiosity was very much aroused, and I ventured humbly to ask one of the guards whether I might go and hear the proceedings.

"Certainly not," he answered stiffly. "I am astonished at the request."

Considering that I could have eaten both my custodians, I thought this rather a cool reply. But I felt somehow an irresistible impulse to submit myself to the situation whatever came of it, and no more thought of walking off than if I had been in charge of a file of grenadiers with loaded muskets.

"Does your Parliament take long to pass an Act?" I asked respectfully of the other knight, thinking that he might perhaps be more affable.

"About half an hour," he answered, "if there is no obstruction."

"Obstruction from whom?"

"The members from the Irish Whisky Vault. They give a deal of trouble, and their language is disgusting."

"Are they likely to oppose a bill about such a humble person as myself?"

"I can't say. They are not particular."

"What is their object?"

"They want to have a separate Parliament for their Vault I."

"Where does Parliament sit?"

"At the farther end of the main vault. You cannot see it from here, but you can by moving a few yards. I think we might let you do that, if Sir Vino de Pasto is willing."

Sir Vino de Pasto, who was evidently an ill-conditioned sort of warrior, did not seem very willing, but he bowed a doubtful assent, and I moved from the side vault and looked down the main vault—my guards scrambling after me as fast as their little legs would carry them, and settling as before on a cask on either side of me immediately I stopped.

If the sight that had met my eyes at first was brilliant this full vision was infinitely more so. From end to end the vault was illuminated with a kind of electric light that appeared to irradiate the fungus, and at the farther end, where the Parliament and people were gathered, the scene was positively dazzling.

Both Houses were sitting on casks, and the populace was kept at a respectful distance from their deliberation by a cordon of police drawn right across the vault. The House of Lords was distinguished from the House of Commons by greater dignity, smaller numbers, and more magnificent dresses, and by having sawdust sprinkled thickly over the casks they sat on. They were presided over, as far as I could make out, by an elderly gentleman dressed in purple, with seals of different colours all over him, and a golden mallet in his hand. The House of

Commons was less imposing and seemed to be very noisy. In fact the President (who was dressed in black, and reminded me somehow of a bottle of port come to life) repeatedly belaboured the members with a big stick which he kept by him. Of course I could not hear what was said, but I saw a messenger go with an air of great importance from the House of Commons to the House of Lords, and make an observation to the President, and then the President said something to the House, and two or three lords spoke very briefly, and then the messenger went back again, and in another minute both Houses were up, and some of the attendants were busily engaged in sweeping the sawdust off the casks that the House of Lords had been sitting on, and in brushing it from the garments of the noble lords themselves.

When these important proceedings were over the little people dispersed again and spread over the vaults, but a good many of them came and inspected me curiously, especially the ladies; and while I was thus being made an object of attention, the Marquis of Amontillado advanced towards me, every one falling back respectfully as he did so—one small person in fact falling back over a cask. The Marquis addressed me in a condescending manner.

"Prisoner, I am glad to inform you that an Act for your release has passed the Lords and Commons, and is now awaiting the Royal Assent. Of course, if her Majesty does not give it you will have to die, but the odds are six to four that she will. Ah! I hear the trumpet announcing that her Majesty is coming."

With that the Marquis hurried off, and a great commotion spread among all classes, especially at a particular

part of the vault, luckily near to me, where a clear space was again kept by the police. All eyes were turned upwards, and in a few minutes the fungus opened at that point, and an exquisitely made ladder of champagne wire gilded over with foil was let down. Then the members of the Royal Household came one by one down the ladder. Then a shrill voice above called out "Catch," and a piece of rich Persian carpet was thrown down, which some of them caught and laid respectfully on a big cask. Next came successively rolling down a throne, a cushion, a box of chocolate creams, and a pair of tiny goloshes, all of which were arranged on the same cask. After this there was a pause, and then two ladies came down, and immediately behind them the Queen, who descended with singular grace, and was received with loud acclamations. Her Majesty was a most prepossessing little lady. She had a crown on her head, and carried her sceptre with royal dignity. She wore a dress made of the finest golden cobwebs, with a blue device on it representing a spring with flowers round it, and two birds flying over it. She also wore several orders for wine. She at once took her seat on the throne, and put her feet on the cushion, and a chocolate cream in her mouth. She did not put on the goloshes, their purpose being no doubt to keep the royal feet from dust or damp, but she occasionally used them meanwhile as missiles.

As soon as she had settled comfortably down, the Marquis of Amontillado knelt before her, and made a low obeisance.

"What is your pleasure, Most Noble Marquis?" asked the Queen in singularly clear and penetrating tones.

"May it please your Majesty, an enormous mountain of flesh and bones called man has intruded into our domains, and is now a prisoner."

The Queen's eyes flashed fire.

"Do you mean after Custom House hours, my lord?"

"I do, your Majesty."

"Why trouble me then. You know the law. Call out 5000 of our picked troops, and surround him, and then—need I say more?"

"Your Majesty ever leans to mercy, and I would crave your royal patience for a moment. This hideous monstrosity appears to have been left accidentally in the vaults by his custodian, and to have remained unwillingly. He petitioned leave to depart, and the Lords and Commons have deputed me to crave your Royal Assent to an Act for his release. The Act will contain eighty sections, all contradicting each other, and every section will have five inconsistent subdivisions. Will your Majesty take it as read, or shall I ——?"

"Certainly, certainly," interposed the Queen with a shudder.

"And is your Majesty graciously pleased to pass it?"

"Well, well, I like not shedding the blood even of the lowest type of creature, as you know. But where is the thing you speak of? Bring it hither that I may question it myself."

The Marquis rose from his knees, made another low bow, and then advancing in my direction, told me that the Queen desired speech with me.

"Strictly speaking, you ought to take your boots and socks off, and crawl on your stomach, but it does not much

matter with a stupendous lout like you which part is uppermost."

I felt a little annoyed at these repeated slights upon my personal appearance, but I realised that the Marquis meant well, so I choked it down and followed him, and when I reached the Queen's presence I bowed humbly.

"Is this story true that I hear concerning thee, lump—every blooming word of it?" she inquired, with a searching glance. "Remember you are speaking to none other than the Queen of Table Waters, so called because I agree so well with my subjects."

"It is indeed, your Majesty," I answered, "every blooming word."

"And if it be our gracious pleasure to pass this law, and suffer you to go and join other heaving masses of deformity like unto yourself, will you swear never to divulge ought that you have heard and seen here?"

"I will—I do."

"Then of our royal mercy we will pass this law and spare thee," said the Queen, taking another chocolate cream.

The Queen then turned to the Marquis and said, "My Lord of Amontillado, let him imbibe from a cask of '63 port in Vault D, until he is hopelessly inebriated. Then blindfold him and conduct him to the entrance and thrust him forth, opening the door with our royal key and closing it again. Should he be too far gone to walk get him on to a cask, and roll him along the best way you can. See to it well, and take with you my lords of Geisler, Pommery, Perrier-Jouet, Lafitte, and Niersteiner to assist."

The Marquis again abased himself before the Queen,

and the other noble lords whom she had signalled out did likewise.

"I thank your gracious Majesty most humbly for your sweet clemency," I said, as I prepared to depart.

"You have a proper spirit, notwithstanding your nauseating appearance; you may kiss one of our goloshes lying there."

I did so—nearly swallowing it in the process, as it was no bigger than a lozenge—and then turned to depart, the people lining the way on both sides as I did so, and the Marquis and the other five lords forming up to escort me.

"Stay!" said the Queen. I immediately turned back. "Here is a chocolate cream for you. They are the best sort—sixpence an ounce."

Once more I humbly expressed my thanks, and then fairly got under way and went to the cask in Vault D. Naturally I remember no more.

. . . . . .

The cellarman solemnly declares he never left me, and my wife says if I will go tasting different sorts of wine like that with my weak head what can I expect? But it's perfectly true—every word of it.

LARGE BOYS.

I KNOW few things more remarkable in the transformation of ideas which gradually takes place as we emerge from boyhood into full-grown blessedness, or (to use the American antithesis) cussedness, than the revolution in our notions on the subject of size.

I can remember that when I was a very small boy and my deepest draughts of bliss were imbibed in rides upon the back of a donkey, I used to regard that beast as simply colossal in his proportions. I do not now seriously consider the donkey a large animal.

In the same way, when I was a little boy at school, my eyes used to rest on the person of a big boy with a feeling that nothing larger was possible. I had not the same feeling as to grown men out of doors. They were removed for purposes of comparison from my own personal world by the attributes of whiskers and moustaches, and by the fact that they were not at my school. What impressed me in point of size were large boys. We had several fine specimens in my day. Besides the monitors and other big lads at the top of the school, there was a sprinkling of large boys in the lower forms. I will not apply to these latter the time-honoured remark, that they looked like Tritons among minnows, because I am rather sceptical personally about

Tritons, and have a rooted conviction that if there is such a thing as a Triton (which I don't believe), he is never seen in company with minnows. At all events I certify that I never caught one with a worm. But I will say that beside these heroes I used to feel a sense of having shrunk in the wash, and a despair of ever arriving at their majestic bulk.

These large boys in lower forms had generally come there as little boys and remained in the lower school while they grew big, for the simple and sufficient reason that they never could succeed in getting out of it. Constant drafts of small scholars would come up from the form below, and pass in due time to the form above, but they, as it were, clambered over the big boy, who could not intellectually stride with them, and left him behind, a monument of contented incompetence. Ultimately the boy or his parents would come to the conclusion that upon the whole it might be as well if he left, and then he did leave, and would generally preface his departure with the announcement that he was going into his father's office,—a statement which allowed of so much scope to our imagination (and probably to his) that it filled us with the deepest envy.

Occasionally I have come across these monsters in later years, but bless you, something has happened to them—or me—and they're not a bit the same. Where I used to look up to the fourth waistcoat button, I now look down at its owner's face, and wonder how I ever came to think him such a big fellow. How fat he has got, too. Why, if you were to hit him in the stomach, he would double up and be out of breath for an hour. Muscles—not a bit of it; he looks as flabby as tripe. Height—no, sir, he's not 5ft. 7in.: I tell you, sir, that he is *not* the Smith who used to be in

my form. Smith was a great big powerful enormous boy, who could lift me like a baby. Smith used to tell me wonderful stories about his strength. Smith once fought and conquered an omnibus-conductor in the Peckham Road —at least he said so, and pointed to a black eye which the conductor had given him, as a convincing proof that he, Smith, had thrashed him, the conductor, because, as Smith said, if he hadn't he would have had two black eyes of course, wouldn't he? Q.E.D. Do you mean to tell me that *this* person is the hero of such an exploit as that? No! a thousand times no.

Wait a bit, though. Now I think of it, perhaps Smith is not the only person who has altered in the last twenty years. He certainly is not the Smith who used to be in my form, but then I rather doubt whether I am the boy who used to be in Smith's form, and listened with bated breath to the omnibus-conductor narrative. Maybe we have both been dressing for new parts all this while in the theatre of which father Time is sole lessee and manager, and when we come on the stage together, we are so well made up that we don't recognise each other.

PROBATION LISTS.

I OPINE that if I were to use the expression "Probation List" in a familiar way to any acquaintance of mine who was not also an old schoolfellow, he would stare vacantly at me, and have doubts as to the state of my mind.

On the other hand, I can imagine the following scene.

I am captured by brigands on some wild spot—I cannot think of a good place to mention, but Clapham Common crosses my mind as a likely resort for brigands. While several revolvers are pointed at various parts of my anatomy, I meekly hand over my watch and chain, a locket containing a front curl of her whom I love, and all my available ready money, which I am able from experience to estimate at two-and-ninepence. I am asked what else I have about me, and I observe that I have nothing but a few worthless papers. I am told to hand them over. I produce them. They are roughly seized and passed by one of the robbers to the leader of the brigands, who has been looking on with folded arms and with a sneer on his haughty face. They are handed to him partly because he *is* the leader, and partly because none of the other gentlemen can read. He glances rapidly through them and throws them away one by one. As most of them are unpaid bills I don't mind. He comes last to my pocket-book, which he examines with

care as containing a possible "Fiver." He finds nothing to reward his scrutiny, and is about to throw it after the papers, when he suddenly gives vent to a loud exclamation, and as all eyes turn towards him (including mine) he brings forth, and with feverish eagerness unfolds a somewhat worn and ancient looking sheet of paper, bluish in colour, and with printed matter on it, consisting of a list of boys in their various forms and in order of merit for the half year.

"Merciful goodness gracious!" he cries, "this is A PROBATION LIST!"

"Most noble, gallant, enterprising, and all-powerful sir," I answer (I am always civil to brigands when they capture me), "it is."

"And you are?"

"Smith."

The noble captain's bosom heaves with emotion, and his agile, though well-knitted frame, is racked with sobs. The bandits stand by respectfully while the captain weeps, and one of them, with a marvellous instinct of true delicacy, abstracts my silk handkerchief from my tail coat pocket and silently hands it to his chief, who wipes his streaming eyes, and then absently places it up his sleeve.

At length the captain addresses me again in a voice broken with emotion.

"You know not who I am. 'Tis natural. I hardly know myself at times. But divested of this"—he here takes off a thick black beard fastened round his ears with wire—"and this"—here he removes a shaggy wig of the same colour—"and this"—exit a large moustache—"I am Jones. I was second when you took the prize on the Lower Fifth, but I licked you in arithmetic and French, and I stole your

Euclid and cricket-bat. I have them still, and prize them dearly as relics of the days gone by for ever. This very Probation List has my name on it. Go! One of my band shall conduct you in safety to the nearest omnibus. You may have all your papers back except the dear old Probation List—that is, if you can find them anywhere about the Common, but as it is pitch dark, and they have all been blown away, I don't much fancy you will. Your watch and chain and locket and money I will keep, in memory of this strange meeting with an old schoolfellow. Farewell, Smith—think kindly of me. The Probation List has saved your life." Curtain.

. . . . . .

Not many weeks since I was looking through a number of old Probation Lists with an old school chum. Dear me, what recollections they brought back to us, and how we compared notes! "Do you remember Mopper—boy who was late every morning and never parted his hair?" "Popper—let's see, didn't he go out to India?" "Topper—I met him in the street the other day and heard all about him. Had lost sight of him for years." "Flopper—poor old boy, he's dead." "Hopper—rising man at the Bar." "Nopper—has a school in the country somewhere." *Et sic ad infinitum.*

I never think of the Probation Lists of my old school without recalling a touching incident which happened some eighteen or twenty years ago. A lad belonging to the school was skating one day during the Christmas holidays in a London Park. A terrible disaster happened. The ice suddenly gave way, and among many others, the poor boy was drowned. When his lifeless body was recovered, and

his clothes were being searched for means of identification, a Probation List was found in one of the little lad's pockets. His own name, of course, was in it. Doubtless he had shown it proudly to his parents, and carried it about with him as a prized possession. But the chapter was closed even before its opening pages had all been written, and it was fitting that the record of what had been achieved should have been closely associated with the sad fate which determined that that Probation List should be for him the last.

Ah me! If we look over the names of those who were in the same form with us, in a Probation List, we find a medley of some whom we know to be prosperous or distinguished in the world; of others who are dead and gone; of others who have not kept abreast with us in the stream, and against whom we have to write Failure, and sometimes even Disgrace. And if we push it closer home still, and ask ourselves whether we have accomplished all the expectations and hopes that filled us when the ink was still fresh on the Probation Lists in which our own names figured, we may be able, some of us, perhaps, to give a cheery answer, but which of us will say "yes" without any reserves in his heart of hearts?

CHUMS.

I SUPPOSE such of us old boys (I use the term in its technical scholastic sense, and not as indicative of advanced age) as can only trace our education back to a London school, must reluctantly admit that a school to which most of the lads go from home every morning to separate from their schoolfellows immediately the last "Amen" has been said at the end of afternoon school, cannot in richness of associations and personal friendships compare with the country schools at which most of the boys are boarders, and live as well as work together during nine months in the year. It has not fallen to us to incur with some chosen comrade the excitement and personal danger involved in privily bringing tarts or almond rock from a pastry-cook's shop "out of bounds." We know nothing of birds'-nesting, and never heard of any forest in the immediate neighbourhood of the school building, expect Chimney-pot forest. We have never occupied the position of receiving a hamper from home, and becoming thereupon immediately conscious of the fact that several fellows whom we thought before were rather indifferent to our many virtues, were really very fond of us indeed, and could not be happy out of our sight —until the hamper was empty. We never on a particular evening of the year joined hand in hand in a circle, and

sang some particular song which has always been sung in that particular school on that particular evening to that particular tune, from the time of Nebuchadnezzar, and always will be ditto, ditto, ditto, until there is no one left to sing except Macaulay's New Zealander.

These and many other incidents of country school life which go far to build up the store of friendship and green memories of happy days gone by, have been denied to us. But, allowing for all that, I make bold to think that there are few of us—whether old or young—whose greatest friend (I am of course excluding the ladies—bless 'em) is not a past or present schoolfellow. It is so with me, and it is so as to every schoolfellow with whom I ever compared notes, or of whose associations in life I ever had any knowledge personally. There is a something—an indefinable something not to be twisted into words—about the friendships we make at school which distinguishes them from all others that we may form, and they hold firm and fast when other friendships languish and die out. I have met in after days, in all sorts of odd places and circumstances, old boys who were friends of mine in my school time, but whom I have not run against perhaps for ten, fifteen —never mind how many years—and I have felt a sense of hearty gladness in grasping their hands, which I could not describe or compare quite with any other feeling in the assortment of human emotions with which I am provided. I remember instantly all about them. Perhaps it is some fellow who used to punch my head occasionally in a friendly way when he had nothing else to divert his mind. Perhaps it is some fellow whose head I used to punch in the same meritorious manner, in which latter

case it is just possible that he was not particularly large or strong. Perhaps it is some fellow who used to come to me in school days to help him with his Latin verses, because I could do elegiacs, or to whom I used to go for help in mathematics because I never could, for the life of me, bring the angle ABC into friendly relations with the angle CBA. Or perhaps, again, it is some fellow who was better stocked with pocket-money than I was, and used to nobly treat me to an occasional ounce of something sweet and sticky at Mother Wright's. The cap of memory is sure to fit him, and I greet him from my heart as a link binding me still in imagination to the days in which I thought that when I was a grown man my path in life would be elegantly laid out among *parterres* of the most varied and delightful flowers. That this deponent hath not found his anticipations realised; that he hath on the contrary encountered in a general way a superfluity of the largest weeds, and had occasion to notice a striking absence of the smallest flowers—he is prepared to state on oath before the nearest J.P. But that is neither here nor there.

School friendships spring up in many ways, and often, at first sight, present fantastic combinations of characters possessing apparently no sympathies in common. I can recall instances of strong boys being bosom friends of weak boys, idle boys of studious boys—yes, and good boys of bad boys. Instincts of feeling not to be probed by outsiders drew them together. I was a very good boy myself (one of the real apple-of-the-master's-eye-sort), but my dearest friend, then and now, was without exception the most troublesome boy in the school. And what's more, in the words of an old

song, he knows it, oh! he knows it without one word from me. He is now a clergyman.

I think—I am sure—that the world we live in would be a sadder one than it is to us old boys, if it were not for the friendships we formed at school. To every schoolboy, from the head monitor down to the youngest boy in the school, I would heartily commend that as a fact worthy to be borne in mind. Don't let the chances which you have now of making friends among your schoolfellows, real true friends of the right sort, slip by you. Believe me that the friendships of after life will never be quite the same to you as those of your schooldays, and that a boy who leaves school without having made any "chums," enters on life's journey with a sorry provision of luggage.

JERRYBILTON.

THE bath-room of Jerrybilton (Jerrybilton being the name of our surburban semi-detached villa) was its most imposing feature, I think, to us when we first went to live there. The bath was worked by three handles—you know—"Hot," "Cold," and "Waste." We came to this luxury from flat baths, and hip-baths, and foot-baths, and when we first took possession of the house we went at it as if none of us had ever washed before. There used to be quite a competition for first turn at bedtime between draped figures in white, carrying towels and sponges, and shivering but expectant bathers would whisper hoarsely through the door to the more fortunate splashing body within, "I say, how long will you be?"

For a short time the bath answered nobly to the helm, but before we had been a month in the house, it relapsed from its original righteousness, and became a daily cross. First the turning on of the handle marked "Hot," resulted in a sickly trickle of tepid water. Then it produced absolute cold water. Then it didn't produce any water at all. Then it produced hot and cold water in alternate spasms. Then it stuck. Then the handle marked "Cold" turned sulky and brought the water into the bath with a noise as of subdued thunder. Then that pipe leaked, and when we turned the handle the water went into the dining-room

instead of into the bath. The only really consistent performer was the waste-pipe, which had such a strong and ever-increasing sense of duty that at last it frequently acted whether it was turned on or not, and after getting the bath full with great exertion, the level of high-water mark gradually became lower and lower, until the unfortunate bather was left high and dry as if the tide had gone down.

I know it is a mere detail to mention it, but I may just throw in here that a neighbouring plumber and all his men were billeted on the house while this was going on, and that the bath always broke out in a fresh place just after I had paid a big bill for having it thoroughly set right, and received a solemn assurance that it was now in perfect order and would never give any more trouble.

But bless you, the bath-room difficulty was a mere piece of pleasantry to what we went through with the rest of that house. Repairs! Don't mention the hideous word. We were in an everlasting state of repairs. The kitchen-boiler went wrong, the roof went wrong, the rain water-pipes went wrong, the window-sashes went wrong, the front gate went wrong, the bells went wrong, the cistern went wrong, the gas went wrong, the damp got in, the dry rot got in, the rats got in, the mice got in, the black beetles got in, the ceiling plaster gave way, the wall-paper in the bedrooms was principally coloured with arsenic and nearly poisoned us, and then that had to come off. And whatever form the disaster took, the one and only remedy was to send for Mr. Puttywedge, the local plumber, painter, and glazier, who invariably returned for answer that his men were just on a job, but he would send them as soon as possible; and then when he did send them, they always placed a ladder where

everybody in the house had to pass, splashed everything they could reach with whitewash, planted pails of ditto in all directions, and then went to dinner. After which ceremony they came back, splashed with whitewash anything they had happened to miss before, planted more pails of ditto, sang songs to each other, and then went to tea, and did not come back till next day, and not then if it was Monday or Saturday, or an Odd Fellows' Day, or Burial Club Day, or any other local festival.

When we were in the act of taking proud possession of Jerrybilton, the windows of the Siamese twin house had presented very much the appearance of a shop-front in the line of procession on Lord Mayor's Day, and it was evident that we were an object of much curiosity to the inmates. I was rather surprised at first at the number of juvenile faces glued to the windows, but I soon—very soon, indeed—learnt that the house was tenanted by two elderly maidens who kept a seminary for young ladies.

We soon got to know the strong point of that educational establishment. It was *Music.* Music in every shape and form except a brass band. Piano-playing, violin-playing, zither-playing, harp-playing. Classical music, unclassical music, dance music, scales—especially scales. Italian songs, French songs, German songs, English songs. Quartettes, trios, duets, solos, choruses. And the way in which we came to a knowledge of this was through the partition wall, which was a ridiculous delusion and snare. Every sound came through as if it had been wrapped up in a little cotton wool and then thrown at us.

I don't believe that house had any furniture in it except musical instruments. I believe they slept on grand pianos,

sat on violoncellos, and eat out of tambourines. Well there —*it was something* FRIGHTFUL. If I went into the breakfast-room downstairs I used to be treated to a singing exercise. If I fled to the dining-room above I was received with a salvo of scales. If I madly escaped one flight higher, and sought refuge in the drawing-room, an Italian duet was sure to be in progress, of which I did not hear the words, but caught the general effect. And when that was over, and I fondly hoped that my aching head would find repose at last, a pandemonium would suddenly break loose in the shape of a chorus of youthful singers.

As soon as I got to realise what we were in for, and found that my health was giving way under it, my appetite failing, and my hair turning white, I made an attempt to stop it by addressing a most temperate and gentlemanly remonstrance to the ladies of the house. The old cats wrote back a most offensive letter next day—it was so confoundedly offensive that I remember every word of it:—

"The Misses Perrywinkleham decline to be intimidated in the exercise of a *noble* calling by the coarse threats of one" (I was "one") "who is evidently as incapable of appreciating the blessings of a *refined* and *liberal education*, as he is of *gentlemanly feeling*. Should the Misses Perrywinkleham receive any further communication from Mr. Turner, they will at once commit it unopened to the flames, and in case of *apprehended violence* they will appeal to the constituted authorities for protection."

Two or three days after I received that pleasant little epistle I was just issuing from my front door as the young

ladies of the school were re-entering the semi-detatched establishment, after a walk under the close military escort of the Misses Perrywinkleham and various half-starved governesses. The Misses Perrywinkleham immediately elevated their noses sky high and gazed abstractedly upwards. The governesses caught the action and up went their poor little pinched noses too. Finally the young ladies took the hint, and up went their noses too. In fact the procession seemed to be all nose. This mark of ineffable disdain was repeated whenever I crossed the Perrywinkleham path, and I think I was expected to sink under it, but I pulled through.

On the undetached side of Jerrybilton was a house, separated from us only by a narrow space—just enough space to squeeze through—and a wooden paling. Therein resided an old gentleman with a very red face, who had retired from something (it was salad oil, or cocoa-nut paste, or cart grease, or something of that sort), and occupied his leisure principally in the exciting pastime of going to law. He had standing suits with all the local bodies, and filled up the gaps with private individuals. I had not been in my house a week before the old boy sent in to ask my full Christian names, because he wished to summon me for keeping a ferocious animal at large. The ferocious animal was a black and tan terrier which had yelped at him because he hit it with a stick. Then he put his rubicund visage over the paling one morning, and bawled out to my cook that a Virginian creeper planted on my side of the paling, was shooting out twigs over his side, and that unless they were removed by four o'clock p.m. that day, he should bring an action against me. Then he threatened to indict

me for a nuisance because one of my children kept two pigeons. He was a dear old man, and much beloved in the neighbourhood.

But I really think the worst trial of all was a lady who lived opposite. She was a small woman with an immense nose, and she had a husband much older, and three times the size of herself, who had been hopelessly routed in so many nuptial engagements that he did not dare to call his poor old muddled soul his own. She came in my absence to make our acquaintance long before we got our house straight, and in about fifteen minutes corkscrewed out of my wife the number of our servants, the wages paid to each of them, how long we had been married, what was my occupation, my wife's maiden name, whether we had private means [we hadn't], how much I made a year, whether I was a kind husband and father [I am—a model], how many children we had, what we meant to do with the boys, where we had lived before, what rent we paid there, why we left, what rent we were paying for Jerrybilton, how long we had taken it for, whether I sang or played, or recited, or acted, or was literary, or possessed any other special characteristics or accomplishments, ditto my wife. That woman would have been a fortune to the proprietor of a private lunatic asylum as an infallible goad to madness. Her most prominent mania was the everlasting getting up of entertainments—concerts, theatricals, recitations, anything that meant tickets, flaming posters, personal importance, and patronage, but never by any chance meant anything to the charitable institutions for the benefit whereof they purported to be organised. Mixed up with all this was a ramshackle old brougham which I could cheerfully

have burnt, an antediluvian driver whom I could as cheerfully have poisoned, in mercy both to him and myself, and a venerable horse to which the pole-axe would probably have been a welcome relief. Would we take tickets for this concert (which was sure to be *very* good) at 5s. a piece. Would the enclosed tickets for to-morrow night (at the reduced price of 3s. each) be of any use to us, and if not, would we please send them on direct to A. B. Smithers, 342 Snoodlam Road, Upper Clapton, N.? Would we drop in this evening for an hour to meet Mr. E. Cackwood Jones, who was a member of seventeen amateur dramatic clubs, and a *most* witty man? He would be sure to say something funny. Would I recite a piece to occupy not less than eight minutes thirty seconds, or more than ten minutes forty-five seconds, at an entertainment in the New Cut, Lambeth, which she was getting up for next Thursday, and would I please answer by the bearer, as she was just going in the carriage to see about the programmes?

In a moment of unsurpassable imbecility and blind conceit I let out to that awful female that I had written a comedy. She rose, extended her feathers in all directions instantly, and pounced on me like a hawk on a field-mouse. She wanted me to read it to a few friends at her house, to send it to her to show to Mr. Hamilton Blopuff, who was a really splendid actor and a great personal friend; to let it be played by an amateur dramatic club at an entertainment which she threatened to go off in her carriage there and then to get up; to do anything under the clouds that would set that appalling female and that abominable vehicle simultaneously in motion. I backed out step by step, but I had almost to get on to the roof to escape.

We lived several years at Jerrybilton and had a good big comprehensive illness in the family every year. When we wanted to reckon periods we had no need to go by our annual sea-side trips or birthdays, but could reckon by measles, scarlet-fever, whooping-cough, diphtheria, and so on. The doctor assured me it was a most healthy place, but he hinted that Jerrybilton was not perhaps quite as well built as it might be. I gradually came to the same conclusion, after spending a fortune in repairs, and ultimately moved into the Kensington Parish Workhouse, which I find much more economical and convenient, in every way. Visitors are admitted every Saturday from two to four, but I am not allowed to receive presents of snuff, which I do not at all mind, as I cannot take it without sneezing. I believe my wife and children are in another wing, dressed in pea-green garments, but am not quite sure. Anyhow I am all right myself, thank you.

OUR F. F. AND G.

His name was Atkinson, but we christened him our Friend, Philosopher, and Guide, and in a paroxysm of wit abbreviated the title to F. F. and G. I had known him from boyhood. He was a confirmed bachelor, I a married man. He had travelled all over Europe. I had scarcely ever been out of England. He was, as he frequently observed, "up to the ropes," when regarded in the light of continental holiday-making. I was the exact reverse. The point of contact was that we were great friends and in common need of a short holiday; and the consequence was (as they say in the game), that he practically took charge of myself and my wife, as if we were teething infants, and walked us off to Holland.

When I say walked us off, I use a term which I could wish to have been literal. We had unfortunately to cross the sea from Harwich to Rotterdam, and then the contrast came out once more, for he was very well indeed, and we were not. We were about as far from well as our many enemies could possibly have desired, and when I passed through the saloon with intent to go on deck and get a little air, and there perceived a large joint of cold roast beef rather underdone, I felt no better than before.

At 9 a.m. we reached our journey's end. My wife and I

emerged feebly from the cabin, rolled in our gait quite unintentionally, and indeed, against our express wishes, our countenances were of a pale olive green colour, and we felt an earnest desire to lie down in the nearest gutter and expire. But the F. F. and G. was not going to let us say die at any price. The gangway was hardly laid down when he was on it with his own luggage (limited to a very small black bag, which on principle he never exceeded) and most of ours. As I looked at him with lacklustre eyes, I saw him one moment charging across the gangway all fire and parcels, and the next retreating inch by inch before a crowd of policemen, custom-house officers, and porters who came rushing on the other way. He was driven back by superior numbers, but not to be denied, he made another sally the moment the rush was over, and landed on shore the first man off the boat. I think he had told me in the middle of the night that such was his intention, but I was rather particularly engaged at the time, and did not take much notice.

We followed presently as best we could, and found that he had already captured a cab and put the luggage on it, and that we had nothing to do but get in. Then followed a short drive to the hotel which he had selected, and wherein he secured the best of everything in the shortest possible space of time after our arrival.

I am not going to describe Holland—have no fears on that score. Neither its features, people, rivers, canals, or odours. I am solely concerned with the F. F. and G. and his works, and all that he did. He had a rooted belief, founded, I am bound to say, on lengthened and varied personal experience, that everybody wished to rob us, and

that he was not going to be bested or allow us to be so. He demonstrated these convictions, first, by assuming control over the exchequer and forbidding me on any pretence to allow my hand to steal in the direction of my pocket; and secondly, by engaging in pecuniary skirmishes with all comers. Hotel-keepers, guides, flymen, shopkeepers, porters, he was ready for each in turn, and though he could not speak Dutch, he made himself understood by the liveliness of his gestures, and by the practical method of paying half of what every one asked, and then waving his hand as one who had uttered his last word, and walking off. I remember that on one occasion in a shop this plan of action was resented, so much so that the man took a piece of china out of the F. F. and G.'s hands, and declined the coin which had been placed on the counter. I was really the purchaser myself, having admired the article in the window, and I thought the price asked very moderate. But when I plucked his sleeve and murmured something to the effect that I should rather like to have it, if he did not mind, he turned on me so angrily, that I felt it very much.

"Give the fellow what he asks?" he burst out, "certainly not; if he can't make a bargain like all the rest, let him suffer for it and learn his business. Preposterous!" And thereupon he bundled out of the shop and banged the door, and I had to be off, occasionally looking behind me like Lot's wife, but not daring to rebel openly.

The F. F. and G. had a profound contempt for public appearances which I could not choose but admire, though, being naturally rather self-conscious, I was occasionally a little embarrassed myself when identified closely with his

proceedings. At a *table-d'hote* dinner one evening, we determined to have a good bottle of claret, and we ordered (I mean he ordered) one with a long name and appropriately high price to it. When it arrived and we tasted it, the conclusion was irresistible that it was very poor stuff. Now, had I been alone I should probably have drunk it, or at most remonstrated mildly in a whisper with a view to a fresh bottle. But the F. F. and G.'s methods were very different, and I could see in the flashing of his eye and the irritated twitching of his moustache that a storm was brewing. He took a second sip, then uttered in a tone audible all over the room—

"Filth."

He then turned to the waiter.

"Send the manager here."

The waiter vanished, and presently in came the manager, creased in smiles. Every eye, I need hardly say, was by this time centred on us, and every ear, as it were, cocked up to listen, and my wife was quite flushed with confusion.

"Never mind, old chap," I murmured, as the manager advanced.

"Never mind, indeed! Do you think I'm going to be bested?"

I saw that remonstration was vain and gave it up.

"You ask for me, sair?"

"Yes, I did. Have the goodness to tell me what you call this," pointing to the bottle.

The manager took it up and deferentially read the name on the bottle.

"Oh! do you? Oblige me by tasting it—that is if you *don't* mind colic."

He grimly poured a glass out and the manager tasted it.

"Perhaps, sair, it is jest a leetle corked."

"Perhaps it isn't. Perhaps it's the commonest *vin ordinaire*, for which you ask us to pay ten times the proper price, because you take us for a parcel of idiots!"

The manager huddled himself together with an air of gentle deprecation, but before he could speak the F. F. and G. resumed.

"Now, I'll tell you what you can do. You may either leave this and charge it in the bill at one florin instead of five, or you may bring us a bottle of the wine we ordered, if you have got such a thing in the whole blessed place. And don't suppose, please, that you can best me, because you can't."

The manager departed crestfallen and presently returned with a bottle of really good wine, of which the F. F. and G. imbibed his share with the conscious pride of a conqueror.

"That's what these chaps do," he observed to me philosophically, as one who instructs a disciple. "They get hold of bottles with good labels on them, and put in any wash that comes first, and palm it off at a high price. They are pulled up now and then, but between people who don't know one wine from another, and people who will swallow anything rather than have a row, they score heavily on the average. Confounded robbers!"

Having every reason to believe that our F. F. and G. resented the tipping of hotel servants as being an imposition, and that we might consequently leave amid a shower of muttered imprecations, I used at first weakly to hang about the passages when we were leaving a hotel with intent to surreptitious offerings. But I was caught almost

immediately in the act of giving a silver coin to a waiter, and the F. F. and G. was so reproachful that I felt as if I had committed a horrid crime. After that he made me go out first, and watched me like a suspected person when the hour of departure drew near.

The proceedings of each day were arranged by our F. F. and G. after much examination of his guide-books and notes, and communicated to us at breakfast. We had no more liberty of action than a caucus-ridden member has of exercising any option as to his votes in Parliament, but in our case the despotism was certainly benevolent, which I fear it can hardly be said to be in the other, as if we had been given our liberty we should certainly not have known what on earth to do with it. As we eat our breakfast we listened humbly to the programme, which was given out oracularly somewhat after this fashion :—

"I have sketched out what we are to do to-day, which I hope you will approve of (this last conveyed in a manner which implied that disapproval would not really be countenanced for a moment). "We will start at ten *punctually*" (the emphasis for my wife's special benefit, as she had disgraced herself once or twice by being thirty seconds late), "and go by tramcar to the station. We shall catch the 10.20 train for A——" (as you will observe, I am sticking so steadfastly to my promise not to drag in descriptions, that I will not even mention the name of a town), "and arrive there at eleven. We will then go over the Museum and the Zoological Gardens, and take a look round the town, which will occupy us till about one. That will take us till lunch, and we will have that at a café, which I remember *well* where you can get excellent food at a moderate price.

I have an old bill from there, so I know they can't best me. After lunch we will go by boat to B—— and explore the town, and the Museum, and the Zoological Gardens, and have a cup of coffee at a place I recollect, where you can get it very good and not be chizzled. Then I think we shall have time to take the train and work back by C——, where we can just look in at the Museum and the Zoological Gardens, and go over the town, and finally land here at about six. That will leave us just time to pay a second visit to the Museum and the Zoological Gardens here before dinner. Then after dinner we will go to the theatre, where they are doing 'Faust' to-night. The seats are very cheap, and there is nothing to pay for booking unless you take them through the thieves at the hotel, in which case we shall be landed for extra charges, and probably get infamous places. Don't tell me! I know the ropes."

As a sample of our visits to the theatre, I will instance that particular evening on which we went to see "Faust." When we reached there a goodly crowd was trooping in, and the F. F. and G. told us to stand by a certain pillar while he got the tickets. He placed himself at the end of a long single file leading to the booking office, and we saw him gradually getting nearer to the promised land, and becoming every moment more imbued with an idea that he was being in some unaccountable way bested. When he was at last only a few places off, a fat little Frenchman got in his turn to a little window inside which the boxkeeper was stationed, and then commenced a conversation, which was certainly calculated by its length and purposeless imbecility to try the patience of a saint, and drove the

F. F. and G., who was not a saint, frantic. The little Frenchman examined the plan of the theatre, critically considered the position of each vacant seat, inquired all the prices over and over again, compared the relative advantages of this and that part of the house, and was altogether dreadful. I saw that the F. F. and G. was fast losing restraint, and thinking that I might perhaps soothe him a little, I left my wife and walked towards him. Just as I did so he broke out.

He commenced with objurgations uttered in tones like rolling thunder, in French, German, and Italian. This relieved him for a few moments, but the little Frenchman, quite unconscious of the storm he was raising, still retained his place at the window.

Then the F. F. and G. fairly let go.

"Are we all going to be bested by that miserable little wretch?" he roared. "Is he to stand at the window all night talking senseless drivel and making up his jelly-bag of a mind, while we wait here for our seats? Will no one help me to remedy this cruel wrong! Oh! Sacrissimo! This is too, too terrible!"

Though his words were not understood his gestures were unmistakable, and moreover even the patient Dutchmen who stood in the line were getting rather sick of it on their own account. Wherefore remarks were made to the man in the box office, and the little Frenchman, to his great indignation, received digs in the back from sticks and umbrellas, which at first only resulted in his directing his remarks behind instead of in front, but ultimately caused his retreat.

It also caused mine, for the F. F. and G., when looking

fiercely at the foe's retiring form, caught sight of me, and perceiving that I had quitted the pillar, waved his hand with a gesture which I dared not disregard, and I slunk back again abashed.

When we all three went out together the F. F. and G. never actually walked with us. He, so to speak, threw himself out in skirmishing order in front, and whenever we neared any stopping place he put on what we used to term the official trot, and by the time we came up had made all things smooth and easy for us. This general rule was subject, however, to one conspicuous exception. Whenever we were accosted by a guide who perceived our goggle-eyed wonderment, and swooped down upon us with a mildewed pamphlet of erroneous statements as an easy capture, then would the F. F. and G. infallibly turn back almost by instinct and metaphorically smite that guide, hip and thigh, until he fled discomfited.

They never could make out at the hotels our relations to the F. F. and G. When he seized and carried up or downstairs stupendous packages and declined to allow one of the hotel myrmidons to touch them, they took him for a courier; when he ordered dinner for all three with an air of despotic proprietorship of the party, they thought he must be an eccentric nobleman: when he consulted the maps and guides, and disdained all assistance from the establishment in fixing a route or finding any given spot, they rather went back to the courier theory again: when he gesticulated and danced with rage because something was not what he thought it ought to have been, they set him down as a more or less dangerous lunatic with a male and female attendant; and when he paid the bill and left

the attendant harpies feeless—then they had thoughts about him, which I cannot reproduce in polite language.

How should we have fared without him? How many times and oft should we have been robbed? What should we have done and omitted that we ought to have omitted and done? What would have been our portion if we had had to get along the best way we could instead of being got along the best way anybody could? How often should we have been turned into bad bedrooms, eaten indifferent dinners, gone to the worst hotels, missed the best sights, wished the whole expedition at Jericho, been snappish to each other (we are sometimes when going up stream), failed to understand anything anybody said? In fact should we not have made a fearful hash and dire failure of an expedition which, as personally conducted by the F. F. and G., was a gigantic success? Yes, most emphatically, yes, we should. Wherefore, though I am fain to jot down idly a few peculiarities of our dear old friend I drink to his best of health, and will give him any day a testimonial absolutely staggering under the weight of its superlatives, for the best of companions, the most knowing of travellers, and the most self-sacrificing and efficient conductor of hopelessly metropolitan Britons out for a holiday in foreign parts, that ever lined the inside of his waistcoat with smuggled cigars, and looked in the eyes of a Custom House officer with a face expressive of ineffable virtue and innocence.

WHAT NIGGLES MADE UP.

I WAS sitting in my study one day engaged on a piece of composition which will, I fancy, make a tremendous stir if only I can get over the first page and really warm to it, when I heard a knock at the door. Looking in that direction I perceived through a glass pane a small round head, with two eyes in the same opened very wide and looking hard at me, and recognised a small son of mine, ætat. 7, and familiarly known in our family circle as Niggles, for no earthly reason that I am aware of.

"Come in," I said.

It came in.

"What do you want?" I said.

"I say, father, I've made up a story."

I at once put on my most austere expression.

"But do you not know, my boy, that it is very wicked to make up stories. Are you not aware that little boys who begin by telling stories generally go on to stealing apples, and finish by killing their nearest relatives?"

"Oh! I don't mean that sort of story, I mean your sort—what you make up, and we have to listen to so many times over."

I winced a little, but the dear boy is naturally candid. He takes after his mother.

"Well, dear, and what about the story?"

"I want it printed in a regular book, and I should like the cover red and gold, and lots of pictures, and my name on it—you know."

"But who is going to do the pictures?"

"Oh! the printing man, or some one. They often have them in books. I've got lots upstairs with pictures."

"And what is this wonderful story about?"

Niggles made no immediate answer, but proceeded to search among his garments, and after unearthing numerous personal properties, ranging from string to acidulated drops, produced a scrumpled roll of paper, which I recognised as having been obviously abstracted from my own writing-case.

"I'll read it to you if you like. I don't mind."

"Can't you tell me about it without reading it all?"

Tremendous shaking of the head.

"Oh! no, it's all a regular real story to read properly—not a silly making-up thing as you go along like Nana does. Just you listen."

Suiting the action to the word, my son without more ado settled himself on my knees, pushed aside my own manuscript, with no more regard for its heaven-born flashes of genius than if it had been food for the tail of a kite, planted his elbows on the table in front, and proceeded to read without a stop of any kind, unless an occasional gulp for breath could be so termed, the following remarkable narrative which he had divided into two parts:—

The Two Brothers.

Two young men once lived in lodgings and they paid *their* rent by selling corn as the rent was only a penny a

week which I think is very cheap and at last one of them married and his wife and children were very very happy because their father was so kind and very soon their father got much richer and still sold corn and bought some horses and was able to give them corn enough the eldest child was twelve years old the youngest was nine as he only had two children and very soon the mother died and the father was left a widower with his children which were very unhappy the father to make the children a little happier took them for a trip abroad the children were so happy that they were very sorry when the day came that they had to return the children had bought many things in France to present to everybody and bought some flowers to put on their mother's grave a little while after the father died and the children were left orphans their nurse and servants were very kind to them but they lived so long that they forgot ever having a mother or father and very often asked if they ever had one as it seemed so funny to them not having one One of them died and then the other the next day so that all four lived very happily in heaven so I must end my long story as I have nobody more to tell you about.

VOL. II.

THE ELDEST BROTHER.

You know I told you children about the youngest brother's marriage whose name was Walter and age was four-and-twenty now I am going to tell you about the eldest brother's marriage when Walter took his children for a trip abroad he was surprised when he came back to find that his brother was not at home as he said he would be and he asked the

servants how it was and they said he was gone to Westminster Abbey to be married to Miss Douglas and Walter went instantly to Westminster Abbey to see his brother married to Miss Douglas and went to her house to say his health unto the bride and bridegroom as he knew where Miss Douglas lived and all three of them went happily to the station next morning when the bride and bridegroom woke up to find themselves at Mill Hill to look out of their window to see the St. John's Wood boys playing in their playground and very soon dressed and made breakfast very quick on purpose to go and see the boys play as they knew a good lot of them the boys were awfully pleased to see them as they had never seen them look so nice before in their lives a little while after when they went home to dinner they heard ring-a-ting-ting at the bell and rat at the knocker they both sprang to their feet and the bridegroom was very much amazed to see his own brother dear Walter Mrs. Piper was very glad to see her brother-in-law and they all three of them liked Mill Hill so that they wrote home and sent some money in their letter and said send for a van that goes into the country as we are going to live here the servants got the letter by midnight and woke up by hearing a rat-a-tat at the door and instantly sent for the van after they read the letter the van came and the men worked all night and very soon arrived at Mill Hill next morning the servants dressed very quickly next morning without having any breakfast and called for a cab man to come and take them to the station and arrived very quickly as the horse was a racer and when they got there they discovered that the men had not put their address on *the top of* their letter and wondered what to do but the

moment they got out their eye caught Mr. and Mrs. Piper and Walter Piper who drove them to a very pretty little house they declared they were very hungry and had had no breakfast but Walter and Mrs. Piper would not believe them so they gained nothing till dinner time and then they eat a good deal so as to fatten them but Walter and Mr. Piper were ashamed and so was Mrs. Piper at them and so I must end my long story.

"Don't you think that's a nice story, father?"

"Yes, indeed, I do. It is most deeply interesting."

"And you will have it printed like a real book, won't you?"

"Well, I will see about it. I don't think I can manage about the pictures though."

A look of disappointment was visible for a moment, and then in a reassuring, not to say condescending tone, my son replied—

"Oh! well, never mind, if you really and truly can't. I'll see, perhaps, if I can do some myself. Lend us your pencil, will you?"

I lent my pencil. I have never seen it since.

"I'll just go upstairs and draw some pictures now. You can keep the story, but you must not lose it, will you?"

I promised to take care of it, and the door banged after Niggles. A minute afterwards I heard another knock. The same head and eyes were visible through the same pane of glass.

"Come in."

"I say, father, you will take care of my story, won't you?"

"Yes, Niggles, I said I would."

"Yes, I know you did, only it's very particular. You haven't got a penny, have you, because if you have, may I have it now instead of next Saturday, as I want to get some sweeties?" I may mention that next Saturday's penny had already been anticipated three times.

I produced the penny as the price of a quiet life—and for the same reason I now produce the story that Niggles made up.

THE END.

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